NATION

Ram Mandir lit up ahead of opening

≫ Page: 4 ≪

BUSINESS

Sensex, Nifty end lower; FMCG, IT stocks top drags

≫ Page: 7 ≪

SPORTS

Saumy and Musheer star as India beat B'desh by 84 runs

≫ Page: 8 ≪

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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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CM Ibrahim restrained from using JD(S) symbol

BENGALURU, 20 JAN

A Civil and Sessions Court in City has asked former JD(S) state president CM Ibrahim not to use the party symbol. The ownership of the State's only regional party, Janata Dal (Secular) has witnessed high drama over the last few months as the two factions — one led by JD (S) patriarch HD Deve Gowda and the other by Ibrahim — laying claims to the party symbol.

—Salar News

Court extends custody of AAP's Sanjay, Sisodia

NEW DELHI, 20 JAN

A Delhi court on Saturday extended the judicial custody of AAP leaders Sanjay Singh and Manish Sisodia till 3 February in a money laundering case related to the alleged excise scam after they appeared through video conferencing from Tihar Jail. The court also reserved its order on a bail application of Sarvesh Mishra, a close aid of Singh and an accused in the case. Both Singh and Sisodia were produced before the court through video conference on the expiry of their judicial custody granted earlier in the case. The official concerned told the court that the accused could not be produced physically due to security reasons and lack of police personnel because of Republic Day preparations.

—PTI

>>>More on Page 3

Shoaib Malik ties knot with Pakistan actor Sana Javed

KARACHI/ NEW DELHI, 20 JAN

Former Pakistan captain Shoaib Malik announced on Saturday that he has married a second time to the country's popular actor Sana Javed in Karachi, finally ending the speculations around his separation with Indian tennis star Sania Mirza. The cricketer released his wedding photograph on social media platform X with his new wife, with the words "And We created you in pairs". There have been strong rumours since 2022 about differences between 41-year-old Shoaib and Sania leading to a split, and they have rarely been seen together in the last couple of years. Just a few days back Malik unfollowed the Indian star on Instagram. Their five-year-old son Izaan lives with Sania.*—PTI*

India logs 313 new Covid cases, active caseload now 2,041

NEW DELHI, 20 JAN

India saw a single-day rise of 313 new Covid cases, while the active caseload has declined to 2,041, the health ministry said on Saturday. Three deaths -- two from Karnataka and one from Maharashtra -- were reported in the last 24 hours, according to data updated by the ministry at 8am. The number of active Covid cases in the country stood at 2,331 on Friday, according to the ministry's website. The number of daily cases of Covid had dropped to double digits till 5 December, but it began to rise after the emergence of a new variant and cold weather conditions. After 5 December, the highest single-day rise of 841 new cases was reported on 31 December, 2023, which is 0.2 per cent of the peak cases reported in May 2021, official sources said. Of the total active cases, around 92 per cent are recovering under home isolation. *—PTI*

EVMs for simultaneous polls to cost ₹10K cr every 15yrs: EC

EC said two sets of EVMs would be needed per polling station

NEW DELHI, 20 JAN

Election Commission would require an estimated Rs 10,000 crore every 15 years to procure new Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) if simultaneous polls are held for Lok Sabha and assemblies, according to the poll body.

In a communication sent to the government, the Commission noted that the shelf life of EVMs was 15 years and one set of machines could be used to conduct three cycles of elections in their life span if simultaneous polls were held.

According to estimates, a total of 11.80 lakh polling stations would be required to be set up across India for Lok Sabha polls this year. During simultaneous polls, two sets of EVMs would be needed per polling station -- one for the Lok Sabha seat and another for assembly constituency. Based on past experiences, the EC said in the communication sent to the government, certain percentage of Control Units (CUs), Ballot Units (BUs) and Voter-Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) machines are required as reserves to replace defective units at different stages, including on election day.

At least one BU, one CU and one VVPAT machine make up for one EVM *PHOTO: PTI*

At least one BU, one CU and one VVPAT machine make up for one EVM.

Keeping in mind various aspects, the minimum EVMs and VVPATs required for simultaneous polls would be: 46,75,100 BUs, 33,63,300 CUs and 36,62,600 VVPATs, the Commission said in its letter to the Law Ministry in February last year.

- A total of 11.80 lakh polling stations would be required to be set up across India for Lok Sabha polls this year. During simultaneous polls, two sets of EVMs would be needed per polling station.

In early 2023, the tentative cost of EVM stood at Rs 7,900 per BU, Rs 9,800 per CU and Rs 16,000 per unit of VVPAT.

The EC was responding to a questionnaire on simultaneous polls sent by the Law Ministry.

The poll panel also underlined the need for additional polling and security personnel, enhanced storage facilities for EVMs and more vehicles.

The commission said keeping in mind the production of new machines, increasing warehousing facilities and other logistical issues, the first simultaneous elections can only be held in 2029.

It also observed that five articles of the Constitution will need amendments to hold simultaneous polls to the Lok Sabha and state assemblies.

The government has constituted a panel, headed by former president Ram Nath Kovind, to examine the issue of holding simultaneous elections in the country has been renamed.

—PTI

LAND SCAM CASE

ED questions Soren for 7 hrs at his residence

RANCHI, 20 JAN

Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren alleged that a conspiracy was hatched against him after Enforcement Directorate (ED) interrogated him in a money laundering case for more than seven hours on Saturday.

Addressing a large crowd of supporters outside his residence where he was interrogated, Soren said he was not scared and would face the "bullets first". "A conspiracy was hatched against me, but the final nail in the coffin of the conspirators will be put by us... We will not be scared, your leader will face the bullets first and keep your morale high," Soren told JMM workers who had been outside his house since the morning, and refused to leave even after ED officers left. "I extend heartfelt thanks to you for your unflinching support... Hemant Soren will stand behind every party worker," he said.

Soren, 48, who is also the executive president of the ruling Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM), earlier skipped seven summonses of the agency. He finally gave his consent after the probe agency summoned him for the eighth time.

ED officers reached Soren's residence around 1pm, and began questioning him.

The entire area has turned into a virtual fortress with heavy deployment of security forces, an official said. Security personnel, deployed in large numbers at the spot, are using high-resolution body cameras to keep track of activities around the house, he said.

The measure comes in the wake of the recent attack on ED officials in West Bengal during a raid pertaining to an alleged multi-crore ration distribution scam.

The investigation pertains to a "huge racket of illegal change of ownership of land by the mafia" in Jharkhand, according to the central probe agency. It has so far arrested 14 people in the case, including 2011-batch IAS officer Chhavi Ranjan, who served as the director of the state's Social Welfare Department and deputy commissioner of Ranchi. *—PTI*

Hemant Soren *PHOTO: PTO*

JMM, tribal outfits hold protests

Ranchi, 20 Jan

The ruling JMM along with different tribal outfits staged demonstrations across Jharkhand on Saturday, alleging that Chief Minister Hemant Soren was being targeted by the BJP-led government at the Centre through agencies such as ED. Hundreds of JMM workers, armed with bows and arrows, demonstrated a few hundred metres away from the CM's residence where he was questioned.

Nadda to skip Ram temple inauguration

NEW DELHI, 20 JAN

BJP President JP Nadda will skip the consecration ceremony at the Ram temple in Ayodhya and instead watch the historic event from the Jhandewalan temple here.In a post on X on Saturday, he thanked the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, which is in charge of the temple's construction and management, for inviting him to the 22 January "Pran Pratishtha" event.Noting that the grand temple is being built after 500 years of struggle, he said he will visit it with his family after 22 January for "darshan".Several BJP leaders, including Union ministers Amit Shah and Rajnath Singh, have been invited to the event where Prime Minister Narendra Modi's presence will be one of the highlights.BJP leaders are likely to watch the ceremony from different parts of the country along with others, including the masses, amid the suggestion from the leadership that they should visit the temple after 22 January when a large number of guests are expected. *—PTI*

JP Nadda *PHOTO: XX*

DIVIDE AND RULE

BJP DIVIDING INDIA IN NAME OF CASTE, RELIGION: RAHUL

Rahul alleged that BJP instigates people to fight among themselves *PHOTO: PTI*

ITANAGAR, 20 JAN

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi accused BJP of "dividing the country in the name of caste, creed and religion", asserting that his 'Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra', which entered Arunachal Pradesh on Saturday, was aimed at uniting the people.

While interacting with the residents of Doimukh, he alleged that BJP "instigates people to fight among themselves in the name of religion and language".The Congress leader said the 6,713-km-long 'Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra', which began from Manipur on 14 January and will culminate in Mumbai on 20 March, is aimed at "raising the sufferings of the people of the northeast region".

"We gave statehood to Arunachal Pradesh and our party is always ready to raise the issues of the poor and to work for the betterment of the youth, women and weaker sections of the society," Gandhi said.

- He also questioned the BJP for the "huge unemployment" among the youth in the country.

He also questioned the BJP for the "huge unemployment" among the youth in the country.

"In the BJP regime, neither the government was ready to hear the people's grievances nor did the media raise their issues. During the yatra, I am travelling for several hours from morning to evening and stopping at places to hear the pain and sufferings of the people," he said.

He also said the Congress' fight is "against the BJP-RSS ideology". *—PTI*

NYAY YATRA NOW IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH

ITANAGAR, 20 JAN

Congress' 'Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra' led by Rahul Gandhi on Saturday entered Arunachal Pradesh from Assam.

Gandhi was received by Arunachal Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) President Nabam Tuki at the Gumto check gate in Papum Pare district, where the flag handover ceremony was held.

The flag handover ceremony was held between Tuki and Assam Pradesh Congress Committee president Bhupen Borah in the presence of senior party leaders from both the states.

Speaking on the occasion, Gandhi thanked the people for the warm welcome.

Meanwhile, elaborate security arrangements have been made for the Arunachal Pradesh leg of the yatra. Congress attacks BJP over China issue As the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra entered Arunachal Pradesh on Saturday, Congress took on the BJP-led government at the Centre over the border issue with China.

—PTI

>>>More on Page 3

STRIKE OVER YOUTH'S KILLING DISRUPTS NORMAL LIFE IN IMPHAL

IMPHAL, 20 JAN

Normal life was disrupted across Manipur's Imphal valley on Saturday due to a 48-hour strike called by a committee formed in connection with the recent killing of a 23-year old village volunteer. The Joint Action Committee (JAC), comprising leaders of civil society organisations, has called the strike that began at 5am.The village volunteer was killed in a gunfight between two warring communities in Manipur's Kangpokpi district on 17 January, officials had said.Markets and other business establishments remained closed in Imphal valley, while public transport services did not operate. Attendance in offices was also reportedly thin. No untoward incident has been reported so far, a police officer said.

The hill districts, however, were not affected by the strike. *—PTI*

Nitish rejigs JD(U) team, axes MPs close to Lalan

NEW DELHI/PATNA, 20 JAN

The Janata Dal (United) on Saturday came out with its new list of national office bearers, approved by Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar who took over as the party president less than a month ago.

Veteran socialist leader Vashishth Narayan Singh, a close aide of Kumar who stepped down as the state unit chief three years ago citing health reasons, has been made the national vice president. Singh, whose friendship with Kumar dates back to the 1974 students' movement in Bihar led by Jayaprakash Narayan, replaces Mangani Lal Mandal who in March last year became only the second leader to have been made the JD(U)'s vice president. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

A FLORAL DELIGHT

Lalbagh's R-Day flower show blooms with Basavanna's ideals

BENGALURU, 20 JAN

Over the past three days, the 215th Republic Day Flower Show at Lalbagh Botanical Garden has captivated Bengalureans with the delightful fragrances and vibrant hues of flowers.

The focus of the 11-day flower show organised by Horticulture Department is 12th-century social reformer and poet Basavanna, whose vachanas conveyed messages against gender and social discrimination as well as superstitions. He had set up Anubhava Mantapa in Bidar which was a parliament of philosophers, saints, poets and thinkers with no restriction on gender, social background or caste.

An exquisite floral replica of Basavanna's Anubhava Mantapa steals the spotlight, standing tall at 8 feet and spanning 7 feet in width. Crafted from 1.5 lakhs of roses and 2 lakhs of Sevanthi flowers, this masterpiece symbolises Basavanna's relentless efforts for social change and equality. The surrounding area features a breathtaking array of geraniums, zinnia, dianthus, chrysanthemum, torenia, kalanchoe, and impatiens, with 20,000 flower pots enhancing the ambience. To maintain the freshness of the flowers, sprinklers and coolers have been strategically placed.

"The mantapa teaches people to embrace his ideology against gender, social discrimination, superstitions and rituals," Suresh Kanekar, State General Secretary of State Buddhist Society in Bidar, told Salar News. "I am here for the first time, having completed a 547km journey to be part of this flower show."

The surrounding area features a breathtaking array of geraniums, zinnia, dianthus and chrysanthemum *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

This year's flower show boasts an impressive display of 32 lakhs of flowers across 70 varieties, including 13.5 lakh cut flowers and 9 lakh potted flowering plants. Indo-American Hybrid Seeds, which can be grown in all seasons and all kinds of soil, were put up for sale by Puttaraju from Raja Rajeshwari Nagar. He has been participating in this flower show since 1965, held biannually during Republic Day and Independence Day. In addition to hybrid seeds, Puttaraju offers nursery flower pots containing orchids, leather leaves, gazania, marigolds, and snapdragon. A standout is the Calla Lily, imported from New Zealand, requiring shade and moisture for optimal growth.

Free relaxation and meditation with yogic transmission by Heartfulness Meditation Centre was a treat for visitors to the flower show. "The purpose of providing free meditation is to enhance people's concentration power in this natural setting, addressing their spirituality and mental health amid stress-related problems they face," Vasantha Kumari, a certified trainer at the centre and a retired professor of psychology, told Salar News. "More than 1,000 people have approached us so far, drawn by the calming effect of the fragrance of flowers during meditation."

Addressing environmental consciousness, the city-based Saahas organization, participating for the second consecutive year, raises awareness about waste management. With 40 members engaged in a cleanliness drive under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, they use paper bags to separate wet and dry garbage on the premises, urging visitors to contribute to maintaining the show's splendour.

Complementing Saahas' efforts, a stall set up by the Horticulture Department encourages visitors not to waste anything. The stall showcases products made from waste materials, such as dried banana peels turned into a powder for hair growth and grass used for making baskets and other items. Through infotainments and product displays, the department promotes the waste management principle of Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle.

The third day of the flower show, which will run till 28 January, saw a footfall of 30,000 people. School students wearing uniforms and having an ID card were allowed free entry, while adults and children paid entry fees of Rs 80 and Rs 30, respectively, through four designated gates.

—Salar News

Circular bans divergence from civic work duties

BENGALURU, 20 JAN

Department of Municipal Administration has issued a circular, directing that Pourakarmikas (civic workers) shall not be assigned tasks other than those specified by State government. The circular warns of disciplinary action against both the officers giving such assignments and those accepting services beyond their designated responsibilities. The department has received complaints regarding workers serving in Municipal Corporations, City Councils, Municipalities, Town Panchayats and Notified Areas being directed to perform tasks outside the purview of their assigned duties. The circular said any deviation from these prescribed responsibilities is deemed illegal and will be treated seriously by the authorities. *—Salar News*

KEA exams: Prohibitory orders around centres

BENGALURU, 20 JAN

Prohibitory orders have been issued in 200 metres around centres hosting re-examination for direct recruitment of Police Sub-Inspector (Civil) on Tuesday. To ensure a smooth and orderly conduct of the examinations conducted by Karnataka Examination Authority (KEA), City Police Commissioner B Dayananda exercised his powers under section 144 of Criminal Procedure Code to declare the area within 200 metres of all examination centres as a prohibited zone. Also, a directive was issued to close all Xerox shops around the examination centres from 7am until the conclusion of the examination on 23 January. *—Salar News*

Forest department to geo-tag valuable trees

BENGALURU, 20 JAN

Forest, Ecology and Environment Minister Eshwar Khandre instructed his department to geo-tag precious trees such as of sandalwood, teakwood, bete (timber) and rosewood to prevent their illegal felling.If the trees are geo-tagged, it will not be possible to cut down the trees without obtaining prior permission under Karnataka Preservation of Trees Act, the minister said. The trees present in the lands under Forest Department, villages adjoining forests and in other government lands will be geo-tagged. The minister has given a time of three months to complete the process and to submit a zone-wise list to the department. Recently, cases of illegal felling of hundreds of expensive Manna trees in places such as Belur, Sakleshpura and Idagundi in Uttar Kannada district have come to light. To avoid deforestation in the name of growing ginger crops in some areas, the Deputy Chief Secretaries of the department have been instructed to geo-tag the trees. Anti-poaching teams have also been deployed to prevent the smuggling of valuable timber within the forest. *—Salar News*

KSDL launches 21 new products

BENGALURU, 20 JAN

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Saturday launched 21 new products of Karnataka Soaps and Detergents Limited (KSDL) which include 10 kinds of premium soap, three types of shower gel, six types of soap kit and one new flavour of hand wash.The Chief Minister appreciated Large and Medium Minister MB Patil for increasing the profits of KSDL. Siddaramaiah directed to take strict measures on those who are copying the products of KSDL. "We have to maintain quality to compete with private firms in this competitive era. People are negligent towards government products and that should be stopped through good quality," Siddaramaiah said. KSDL now manufactures a total of 71 kinds of products. *—Salar News*

Priyank accuses Governor of acting on behalf of Centre

Hariprasad lashed out at Cong after CCB sought clarification from him

BENGALURU, 20 JAN

IT and BT Minister Priyank Kharge on Saturday accused Governor Thawar Chand Gehlot of pressurising State government in the case against Congress MLC BK Hariprasad over his remarks on a Godhra-like incident in Karnataka.

Hariprasad lashed out at Congress after Central Crime Branch on Friday sought clarification from the MLC over his comments. "The Governor is repeatedly asking about the case.

Just because we respect him, our Home Department officials met Hariprasad. It is limited only to that and we did not send the police. You have to understand who is behind this," Kharge said.

Kharge accused the Governor of acting on behalf of the Centre. "Why the Governor is interested in this case? Is there any direction for him from the Centre? Is he trying to create embarrassment to the government or Hariprasad? What is the relation between him and the law and order? Such an incident never happened in the previous government," the minister questioned.

Kharge accused the BJP-led Union government of operating through Governors in the states they are not in power. "We will act within the prescribed laws," the minister said.

Hariprasad on Saturday said there was swift action in the case and more information should be obtained as to who is behind all this. "BJP had written to the Governor seeking a probe and the latter might have sought a report.

There was swift action on the case. If all cases going to the Governor are probed at the same speed, I am happy. The police have also violated the protocol by not taking permission from the Legislative Council chairman (before approaching me)," Hariprasad said.

—Salar News

Priyank accused the Centr of operating through Governors in the states they are not in power ***PHOTO:IANS***

Case against activist for remarks on Kharge

KALABURAGI, 20 JAN

A case was filed against right-wing activist Chakravarthy Sulibele for allegedly making derogatory remarks against AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge.

The complaint was submitted by JagadevaGuttedar, the president of Kalaburagi district unit of Congress, to Kalaburagi Police Commissioner R Chetan.

Sulibele made the controversial remarks during the 'Namo Bharat' programme held at Shirava, Raichur. The head of Namo Brigade in Karnataka accused the Kharge family of egoistically inscribing their name on the plaque of ESI Hospital in Kalaburagi.

The comments have drawn severe condemnation, leading to the filing of the complaint. "In a blatant display of arrogance, he insulted AICC President Kharge with uncalled-for words. Legal action should be initiated against this offender," demanded Guttedar in his complaint.

Karnataka Congress took to social media platform X, condemning Sulibele's remarks and calling for his deportation. They urged the Home Minister to take swift action against individuals spreading lies and disrupting societal harmony. *—Salar News*

Chakravarthy Sulibele ***PHOTO: X***

HAVERI GANG RAPE

State govt is supporting rapists: Bommai

BENGALURU, 20 JAN

Former chief minister Basavaraj Bommai on Saturday accused State government of supporting rapists and that police are turning a blind eye to the case of moral policing and gang rape at Hangal in Haveri district.

He said they have been demanding for SIT to probe the Hangal rape case. "However, the Congress government is not willing to do so," Bommai said in Hubballi.

"The case has not been registered under the Pocso Act. This is a medico-legal case and false medical examinations have been done. The government will have to take responsibility for the victim. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah claims he informed the local MLA," Bommai said.

"Criminals are thriving under Siddaramaiah's government. The vote bank is seen in those who are involved in criminal activities, and the government is protecting them," said the BJP leader. Bommai claimed the incidents of rapes and moral policing incidents have increased in the State. "Similar incidents are occurring repeatedly, but police are inactive. The government claims the investigation into the gang rape is on the right track. If so, why did they have to suspend two police officers? In incidents like this, the government should come forward to ensure the victim receives proper treatment," he said.

A protest demanding an SIT probe will be held under the leadership of the Leader of the Opposition R Ashoka. If the government does not heed to it, stronger protests will be held, announced Bommai. About BJP's demand, Home Minister G Parameshwara earlier this week said, "We can't rule the State if we keep fulfilling the BJP's demands." Chief Minister Siddaramaiah also said there is no question of protecting anyone regarding the Hangal case.

—Salar News

No decision yet on declaring govt holiday on 22 Jan: CM

BENGALURU, 20 JAN

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Saturday said no decision has been taken on declaring a government holiday on 22 January when the consecration of Ram Temple will be performed in Ayodhya.

Reacting to BJP's demand for a holiday on 22 January, Siddaramaiah said he has not yet seen the request letter. "No, not yet. We will see. I have not yet seen the letter. We will see it," Siddaramaiah said when he was informed that the Leader of Opposition in the Karnataka Legislative Council Kota Srinivas Pujari had written a letter to him in this regard.

Meanwhile, Vijayendra said on Saturday that the Karnataka government should consider declaring a holiday on 22 January in view of Lord Ram's connection with the State as Kishkindha Kshetra is in Hampi in Vijayanagara district. According to the epic Ramayana, Kishkindha Kshetra was the Monkey Kingdom.

The Anjanadri Hill in neigbouringKoppal district was the birthplace of Hanuman, the ardent devotee of Lord Rama. "The consecration of the temple is a historic occasion not just for India but across the globe as many countries are jubilant about it," the Shikaripura MLA said.

Vijayendra also asked the State government to be on alert to thwart any attempt to create disturbance and untoward incidents to disrupt festivities. *—PTI*

Siddaramaiah ***PHOTO: PTI***

Ram Temple to come up at Mysuru Taluk: MLA GT Devegowda

MYSURU, 20 JAN

Chamundeshwari MLA GT Devegowda has announced plans for constructing a Ram temple at Harohalli in Mysuru taluk. A stone to carve the idol of Ram Lalla was found on the farm of Ramdas, a leader from the Dalit community in Harohalli, the MLA said on Saturday.

With the inauguration of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya scheduled for 22 January, Devegowda said a Bhumi Puja for the construction of the temple in Harohalli would take place on the same day. Devegowda said the temple would be built with donations from the public.

Expressing his commitment to the temple's construction, Ramdas said, "There is nothing more charitable than giving land to the temple. I happily agreed to the construction of the temple, and I will provide the required space in my land."

The temple will feature idols of Lord Rama, Lakshmana, Sita, Bharata, and Shatrughna. Mysuru-based Arun Yogiraj, who sculpted the Ram Lalla idol installed in Ram Temple in Ayodhya, will be approached to carve idols of the temple in Harohalli, the MLA said. Srinivas, who extracted the stone for the Ram Lalla idol, said stones were also supplied for other idols as well. The stone for the Ram Lalla idol has a height of 9 feet and 8 inches while for the Sita idol, it is 7 feet, for the Bharata idol it is 5 stone, and for the Lakshmana idol, it is 6 feet. All these stones are classified as number 1 stones, considered rare and of exceptional quality. *—Salar News*

Owaisi says Babri Masjid was systematically snatched

BENGALURU, 20 JAN

All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) President Asaduddin Owaisi on Saturday claimed that Babri Masjid in Ayodhya was systematically snatched from the Muslims. If the Babri Masjid had not been demolished in 1992, the life of Muslims would have been much better, Owaisi said in Kalaburgi.

"Muslims offered namaz in Babri Masjid for 500 years. When Congress' GB Pant was the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, idols were placed inside the masjid. Nair (KK Nair), who was the collector of Faizabad at that time, shut the masjid and allowed worshipping there. Ram Mandir did not exist when VHP was formed," Owaisi said.

Owaisi said by inaugurating Ram Mandir, Prime Minister Modi is provoking the masses. "If Modi was not there, we would have gone to the inauguration of Ram Mandir," he said.

Owaisi claimed that Mahatma Gandhi never mentioned anything about Ram Mandir. He took a dig at Opposition parties, especially the Aam Aadmi Party and Arvind Kejriwal over their stance on Ram Mandir consecration. The leaders cannot speak about the minorities because they are busy pleasing the majority community, Owaisi said. *—Salar News*

Asaduddin Owaisi ***PHOTO:PTI***

35,000 Ram devotees from State to travel to Ayodhya: BJP President Vijayendra

BENGALURU, 20 JAN

BJP State President BY Vijayendra said on Saturday that more than 35,000 Ram devotees will travel from Karnataka to Ayodhya over around 60 days after 22 January, the day the Ram Temple will be consecrated. As many as 25 trains, each carrying around 1,500 devotees, will travel to Ayodhya from 31 January to 25 March with devotees themselves bearing the expenses, Vijayendra said in Bengaluru.

"The State government should cooperate and maintain the law and order while not hindering the enthusiasm of the Ram devotees.

Cases such as Srikanth Poojari's and damaging the flex of Lord Rama in Kolar can cause trouble," the BJP leader said. If something goes wrong, Congress is to be blamed without a doubt, Vijayendra said.

The inauguration of the Ram Temple will be telecast live on more than 60 PVRs in the State. Vijayendra said the response of the people to the distribution of Mantraakshathe (uncooked unbroken pieces of rice mixed with turmeric) was beyond expectations.

Vijayendra said the statement of Congress MLC BK Hariprasad that a Godhra-like incident may occur in the State shouldn't be dismissed easily as the Congress is in power in Karnataka. Hariprasad is not an ordinary person and the government should check whether he said it intentionally or maliciously, the Shikharipura MLA said.

About IT & BT Minister Priyank Kharge's allegation that the Central government is controlling the State government through the Governor in the matter of Hariprasad, Vijayendra said in the coming days, "We will know whether it is the Central government or State government that is targeting Hariprasad."

—Salar News

BY Vijayendra ***PHOTO:PTI***

RPF hailed for rescuing 2 minors

BENGALURU, 20 JAN

Railway Protection Force (RPF) of South Western Railway has been applauded for rescuing two minors in separate incidents over the past week in State.

In the first instance on 18 January, an RPF team at Hosapete Junction Railway Station in Vijayanagara district intercepted a suspicious 14-year-old girl and a 23-year-old man travelling on Amaravati Express (Howrah Junction to Vasco Da Gama). Alert to the possibility of a kidnapping, the RPF handed them over to Mapusa police station in Goa for further investigation. A case has been registered under sections 363 of Indian Penal Code and 8 of Goa Children's Act.

In another incident, the Bengaluru Division of RPF reunited a 14-year-old girl with her family. The girl, reported missing on 9 January, was spotted at Doddaballapur Railway Station on the next day. Recognizing the possibility that she might have boarded a train, the RPF tracked down the girl and reunited her with the family.

—Salar News

Man arrested in fake visa case from KIA

NEW DELHI, 20 JAN

A man has been arrested in Bengaluru in connection with a fake passport-visa racket busted by Delhi Police, officials said on Saturday.Sadiqulla Baig was taken into custody at Kempegowda International Airport in Bengaluru upon arrival from Dubai on Thursday.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (IGI) Usha Rangnani said a look-out circular had been issued against Baig after his name surfaced in a case of fake visa in Punjab's Ludhiana. Bengaluru airport staff alerted security personnel as soon he landed in India, following which he was taken into custody and handed over to the Delhi Police, Rangnani said.

Baig disclosed during an interrogation that the fake visa sticker was provided to him by a Dubai-based agent, another police officer said. Baig told police that he and his associates cheated people for the sake of easy money, the officer said.Later,the man's bank account was frozen. There was Rs 1.5 lakh in it and Baig said he had transferred the rest of the money to his relatives. Further efforts are underway to trace his possible involvement in other similar cases, he added. *—PTI*

Interfaith couple attacked in another moral policing case

HAVERI, 20 JAN

In another incident of moral policing in Haveri, an inter-faith couple was assaulted by a group of nine individuals. The incident unfolded on the same day the BJP called for a massive protest in Haveri against recent the gang rape and moral policing case. Badagi police arrested the accused to prevent more political chaos. According to the officials, the arrested miscreants attacked couples who were engaged in conversation.

The complainant, an assaulted interfaith couple, filed a complaint against a total of nine individuals.

All the arrested accused are reported to be residents of Badagi. Out of these, only seven have been arrested. Police are actively searching for the remaining two.The case has been registered under 12/24, under IPC sections 143, 147, 341, 323, 354, 504, 506, and 149. *—Salar News*

Kannada signboards: 34,262 notices issued

BENGALURU, 20 JAN

Bruhat Bengaluru MahanagaraPalike (BBMP) has so far issued 34,262 notices to shops, malls and other commercial establishments in City, instructing them to prominently display Kannada language on signboards by 28 February.

BBMP Commissioner Tushar Girinath directed that at least 60 per cent of the signboards must be in Kannada language. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Union Minister for Coal, Mines, Law, and Parliamentary Affairs Pralhad Joshi have highlighted the importance of displaying Kannada boards for shop owners.

Around 50 activists of Karnataka Rakshana Vedike, were arrested after they and vandalised shops in the City demanding Kannada on signboards. *—Salar News*

MORAL POLICING: 3 ARRESTED IN MANGALURU

MANGALURU, 20 JAN

Three people have been arrested on charges of assaulting a young couple of different faiths near Kadri Park in Mangaluru on Friday.

A group of youths followed the couple, both nursing students, and allegedly questioned them about their identity and the purpose of the visit, according to police sources. They used abusive words against the couple and allegedly assaulted the boy. *—PTI*

KENYAN CITIZEN HELD WITH COCAINE WORTH ₹26CR

BENGALURU, 20 JAN

Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) has arrested a Kenyan citizen with drugs valued at Rs 26 crore at Kempegowda International Airport here. The woman was set to travel to Delhi with 2.56kg of cocaine when the DRI sleuths nabbed her on a tip-off on 15 January.

"Specific intelligence was received that a Kenyan woman was to board an Indigo flight to Delhi from Bengaluru Airport with narcotics. The passenger was intercepted and an examination of her checked-in baggage revealed the concealment of cocaine, as detected in field testing kit," a DRI official said. " *—PTI*

CHITRAKALA PARISHATH

Exploring the architectural delights in City

BENGALURU, 20 JAN

The galleries at Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath in City have been buzzing with students, enthusiasts and professionals, all eager to dive into the world of bricks, mortar and imagination over the last two days. The Parishath is hosting a three-day exhibition titled 'AVANI Exhibition 2024' organised by Kozhikode-based Avani Institute of Design.

Celebrating the beauty and brilliance of architecture, the exhibition showcased a stunning array of designs and prototypes. Interactive installations transported visitors into immersive experiences, blurring the lines between art and reality. For aspiring architects, the exhibition is a goldmine of inspiration. Workshops conducted by renowned architects such as Sanjay Mohe, Tony Joseph and George Seemon offered valuable insights into the creative process of designing buildings and architecture.

"The main theme of the exhibition is 'Where do we belong?" said Michelle Leander, the co-organiser of the exhibition, who is also a student of the institute. "That is a question we as architects ask ourselves. When we build something, it should not be a random building at some place, it should have some kind of context, be it micro-context or macro-context, as to where it comes from. Each building has its vernacular style and features," Leander said. The designs on display were based on two themes — ecologies of adaptation and postcolonial pedagogy. In the ecology of adaptation, the ecology of the animals and humans are all able to adapt to that space or the surroundings easily. Postcolonial pedagogy examines the effects of colonialism on the built environment. This theme explores the ways of thinking about built form and space as cultural landscapes. "The target audience of this exhibition were architects, but we received people who come to the Chitrakala Parishath regularly and even people who write thesis about architecture had attended this exhibition as well," she added. Anjali Sujat, an assistant professor at the Avani institute and also the organiser of the exhibition, emphasised how the exhibition was set up by the enthusiastic students within four days. "This is the first time we organised this exhibition in Bengaluru, and the crowd has been amazing till now. We will be having more activities and workshops lined up for tomorrow (Sunday)," Sujat told **Salar News.** Leander said they have hosted this exhibition at Kozhikode, Thiruvananthapuram and Coimbatore. *—Salar News*

PHOTO: PTI

Speaker to hear NCP disqualification pleas from 23 Jan

MUMBAI, 20 JAN

Maharashtra assembly Speaker Rahul Narwekar will start hearing petitions seeking disqualification of MLAs from rival Nationalist Congress Party factions from 23 January, a leader of the Sharad Pawar-led NCP said on Saturday. The NCP split in July last year after Ajit Pawar and eight party MLAs joined the Eknath Shinde-led state government. Since then, both factions have laid claim to the party name and symbol and have petitioned the Speaker seeking disqualification of those owing allegiance to the other side. Talking to reporters, the Sharad Pawar-led group's Maharashtra unit Chief Jayant Patil said he came to the state legislature complex here on Saturday with the anticipation that his statement will be recorded. *—PTI*

Former MP Anadi Sahu dies at 83 years

BHUBANESWAR, 20 JAN

Former Lok Sabha MP Anadi Sahu died at his residence in Cuttack on Saturday, family sources said. He was suffering from old age-related ailments. Sahu was 83, they said. Sahu was elected to the Lok Sabha twice from Cuttack constituency (1996) as a Congress candidate and Berhampur constituency (1999) on a BJP ticket.Sahu had resigned from the IPS and contested from Cuttack Lok Sabha seat in the 1996 general elections as a Congress candidate against former Chief Minister Biju Patnaik. However, he lost the poll by 57,807 votes and later won it in a by-election. BJP Odisha President Manmohan Samal and Leader of Opposition Jaynarayan Mishra condoled Sahu's death. *—PTI*

AAP discuss LS poll candidates for Pb at Kejriwal's house

DELHI, 20 JAN

A meeting of AAP leaders to discuss its Lok Sabha poll candidates in Punjab was underway at Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's residence here on Saturday. Apart from Kejriwal, the party's national convener, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and other party leaders were present at the meeting.The AAP and Congress, both partners of the opposition INDIA bloc, have been holding talks for seat sharing in Lok Sabha polls in states, including Delhi and Punjab.However, sources in both parties have claimed that their state units were not in favour of any alliance with one another for the elections.The meeting held at Kejriwal's residence was called to discuss the names of party candidates in Punjab, said AAP leaders. *—PTI*

Student beaten up over religious slogan in MP

SHAHDOL, 20 JAN

A teacher and the director of a private school were arrested after a 12-year-old student was allegedly beaten up for raising a religious slogan on the premises in Madhya Pradesh's Shahdol district on Saturday, an official said. The incident took place at Green Bells School in Budhar town, some 22km from the district headquarters, the official said. Budhar police station in-charge Sanjay Jaiswal said English teacher Abdul Wahid beat up a Class 7 student after he chanted Jai Shri Ram'. The student informed his family members, who approached the police along with local residents, he said. The teacher and school director, Shakeel Niyazi, were arrested after a case was registered against them under IPC sections 153 (provocation that will lead to riot), 323 (voluntarily causing hurt), 500 ,Juvenile Justice Act, he said. *—PTI*

Myanmar border will be fenced, says Shah

This comes amid more Myanmar soldiers fleeing into India

TEZPUR/GUWAHATI, 20 JAN

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday announced that inorder to restrict free movement into India, it would fence the border along Myanmar. The announcement comes amid Myanmar soldiers fleeing into India to escape ethnic clashes. Addressing the passing out parade of the first batch of the five newly constituted Assam Police Commando battalions in Guwahati,Shah said the Centre is rethinking the free-movement facility with Myanmar.

The government had said it is planning to fence a 300km stretch of unfenced boundary with Myanmar and end free movement *PHOTO: PTI*

The Central government had said it plans to fence a 300-km stretch of unfenced boundary with Myanmar and end the Free Movement Regime, which allows people living on both sides of the international border to travel within 16 km into each other's territory without visa.

"The India-Myanmar border will be protected like the Bangladesh border... The Government of India will stop the free movement with Myanmar," the Home Minister said.

He also said the Prime Minister's mission of bringing peace and development in the northeast has been successful.

While addressing the Sashastra Seema Bal's (SSB) 60th Raising Day at Salonibari near here, he also said among all the central armed police forces, SSB plays "a unique role in minutely integrating culture, history, topography and language" of the border villages, and bringing people in those areas closer to rest of the country. "In the next three years, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the country will be 100 per cent free from the Naxal problem," asserted Shah.

The northeast has witnessed a 73-per cent decline in incidents of violence, while deaths of security personnel have come down by 71 percent and that of citizens by 86 per cent, he claimed.

During the last nine years, nine peace accords have been signed and nearly 9,000 youths gave up arms, he said.

Shah also expressed gratitude to Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) Chief Pramod Bodo for bringing the youths to the mainstream and engaging them in the development process.Following the signing of the Bodo accord in January 2020, 1,615 Bodo youths have returned to the mainstream, the NDFB was disbanded and Rs 1,500-crore financial aid was provided to Bodoland, Shah said. *—PTI*

SHOWER OF BLESSINGS

Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his visit to the Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple in Tiruchirappalli district on Saturday *PHOTO: PTI*

Court extends custody of AAP's Sanjay, Sisodia

NEW DELHI, 20 JAN

A Delhi court on Saturday extended the judicial custody of AAP leaders Sanjay Singh and Manish Sisodia till 3 February in a money laundering case related to the alleged excise scam after they appeared through video conferencing from Tihar Jail.

The court also reserved its order on a bail application of Sarvesh Mishra, a close aid of Singh and an accused in the case.

Both Singh and Sisodia were produced before the court through video conference on the expiry of their judicial custody granted earlier in the case.

The official concerned told the court that the accused could not be produced physically due to security reasons and lack of police personnel because of Republic Day preparations. *—PTI*

DIDI TO TAKE FINAL CALL

TMC slams Cong over unjustified seat demand

Mamata Banerjee and Adhir Ranjan Choudhury *PHOTO: PTI*

KOLKATA, 20 JAN

- Banerjee asserts that TMC is ready to independently contest all the 42 Lok Sabha seats in the state if not given due importance in the INDIA bloc

TMC on Saturday said its supremo Mamata Banerjee will take the final call on seat sharing with the Congress in West Bengal for the Lok Sabha polls this year and asserted that "unjustified bargaining" cannot be done by the state unit of the grand old party.

Based on the 2021 assembly poll results in the state, in which the Congress in alliance with the CPI(M)-led Left Front had fared badly, the Trinamool Congress top leadership offered the grand old party two seats, out of 42 Lok Sabha constituencies in West Bengal, in the coming general elections, its spokesperson Kunal Ghosh said.

Meanwhile, All India Mahila Congress President Alka Lamba said in Siliguri that the party's leadership has been holding parleys with constituents of the INDIA bloc in different states, including in West Bengal, for seat sharing for the Lok Sabha elections.She said the process will be concluded soon.

Ghosh also said West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is in "communication with the INDIA bloc leadership and that nothing has been finalised yet.The CPI(M)-led Left Front, Congress and the TMC are part of the opposition INDIA bloc.Banerjee had on Friday asserted, in a closed-door meeting with the party's leaders in Murshidabad district, that the TMC is ready to independently contest all the 42 Lok Sabha seats in the state if not given due importance in the INDIA bloc.The state leadership of the Congress, which has been offered two seats by the TMC, is demanding some more constituencies.In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the Congress had won only two seats of the 42 constituencies.The CPI(M) in West Bengal has asserted that its fight was against both the TMC and the BJP in the state. The Congress and the Left could not open their accounts in the 2021 state assembly elections.—*PTI*

SP, Cong start talks for LS poll alliance

LUCKNOW, 20 JAN

Talks of an alliance with the Congress in Uttar Pradesh for the 2024 Lok Sabha polls are in progress, Samajwadi Party (SP) President Akhilesh Yadav said on Saturday.

Talking to reporters at the SP headquarters here, he said several meetings have taken place in Delhi and more will be held soon.

"We are in talks of an alliance with the Congress and a way will be found," said Yadav.whose SP, like the Congress, is part of the 28-member opposition INDIA bloc.

Constituents of the INDIA bloc are engaged in seat- sharing talks in different states.

Yadav's remarks come a day after the SP and the Jayant Chaudhary-led Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) reached a seat sharing agreement in Uttar Pradesh for the polls."The INDIA bloc should be strong. The question is not about which party gets how many seats but about winnability," he added.

Though the SP had no formal alliance with the Congress in Uttar Pradesh in the 2019 Lok Sabha election, the Yadav-led party had no candidate from Rae Bareli. *—PTI*

Bihar's ruling combine to break 100%, says Union Minister Paras

New Delhi, 20 Jan

Amid the JD(U)'s perceived unhappiness with the opposition INDIA bloc constituents, a key BJP ally from Bihar Saturday claimed that the state's ruling combine is "100 per cent" certain to break and a "good development" for the NDA will follow the Ram temple consecration ceremony. Union minister and Rashtriya Lok Janshakti Party leader Pashupati Kumar Paras said differences between Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and RJD President Lalu Prasad have deepened. "Their alliance is 100 per cent certain to break. 'Kharmas' (a period considered inauspicious in Hindu belief) has ended. *—PTI*

JD(U) comes out with new list of office bearers

NEW DELHI/PATNA, 20 JAN

The Janata Dal (United) on Saturday came out with its new list of national office bearers, approved by Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar who took over as the party president less than a month ago.

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar approves the new list of national office bearers in JD(U) *PHOTO: PTI*

Veteran socialist leader Vashishth Narayan Singh, a close aide of Kumar who stepped down as the state unit chief three years ago citing health reasons, has been made the national vice president.

Singh, whose friendship with Kumar dates back to the 1974 students' movement in Bihar led by Jayaprakash Narayan, replaces Mangani Lal Mandal who in March last year became only the second leader to have been made the JD(U)'s vice president after former poll strategist Prashant Kishor who was given the top post in 2017.

Mandal has been made a national general secretary.

The party's most visible face in the media, KC Tyagi, has been designated as "political advisor and spokesperson".

The other spokesperson in the list is Rajib Ranjan, a former MLA from the Chief Minister's home district of Nalanda, who returned to JD(U) last year after quitting the BJP, though he has been stripped of the post of national general secretary he had been holding so far.

The number of national general secretaries has been trimmed down to 11, compared with 22 in the previous list that came out in March last year when the party was headed by Rajiv Ranjan Singh "Lalan", who stepped down last month to concentrate on his Lok Sabha seat Munger, amid rumours that he had grown too close to ally RJD.

Lalan's name does not figure in the new list of office bearers, though he is said to continue to enjoy the trust of Nitish Kumar whom he has accompanied at all meetings of the INDIA bloc so far.

Sanjay Kumar Jha, who besides Lalan is the only leader to accompany Kumar at such meetings, has been retained as a national General Secretary. *—PTI*

Days after quitting AAP, Ashok Tanwar joins BJP

NEW DELHI, 20 JAN

Former Haryana Congress president Ashok Tanwar, who recently quit the Aam Aadmi Party, joined the BJP on Saturday as the ruling party looks to broaden its support base in the state with the induction of the Dalit leader.

Tanwar joined the BJP in the presence of Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar among other leaders and lauded Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, saying the country has changed in the last 10 years.

He told reporters that it was his good fortune that he joined the BJP ahead of the Ram temple consecration ceremony on January.

Welcoming him into the BJP, Khattar called Tanwar his "bhanja" (nephew) as he and the Dalit leader's mother hail from the same village.

Ashok Tanwar joins BJP in presence of Haryana CM Manohar Lal Khatar and BJP Haryana President Nayab Singh Saini *PHOTO: PTI*

Tanwar was likely to join the BJP after leaving the Congress but his "train" took a wrong track and reached AAP, the Haryana Chief Minister said in a lighter vein, adding that they have often been in touch.

Tanwar quit the Congress in 2019 and joined AAP in 2022. In between, the former Lok Sabha MP had floated his party and even joined the Trinamool Congress for a brief period.

He resigned from AAP on Thursday, protesting its likely alliance with the Congress for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

Tanwar said people were impressed with the work done by Modi to improve India's standing and lift the living standards of crores of people. *—PTI*

JARANGE BEGINS MARATHA QUOTA PROTEST MARCH

JALNA, 20 JAN

Maratha quota activist Manoj Jarange along with thousands of others on Saturday embarked on a protest march from Maharashtra's Jalna district to Mumbai to draw the state government's attention to the demand for reservation to his community.Speaking to reporters before beginning the march, Jarange lambasted the government for its "cruel and insensitive" attitude and failure to resolve the Maratha reservation issue, and vowed to continue the fight till his last breath.The protest march began from Jarange's native Antarwali Sarati village around 11am."The Maratha community gave seven months to the government to provide reservation, but no action was taken," he said. *—PTI*

Poll loss: Cong notice to 150 workers in MP

BHOPAL, 20 JAN

The Madhya Pradesh Congress's disciplinary committee has issued show cause notices to nearly 150 local leaders for allegedly engaging in "anti-party" activities during the November 2023 state assembly polls.

The committee issued the notices on Friday, giving the leaders 10 days to respond, failing which strict action including expulsion from the party would be initiated, according to a senior party functionary.

This move by the Congress comes after the assembly poll results in which the party managed to win just 66 seats in the 230-member House.It is also seen as a part of the party's efforts to reorganise before the general elections, signalling a zero-tolerance policy towards internal sabotage and indiscipline.The stern stance from the Congress comes following numerous complaints from the majority of the 164 nominees who lost in the polls, attributing their defeat to "internal sabotage."The notices were issued after a meeting of the state Congress's disciplinary committee. In a press release, the disciplinary committee chief and MPCC treasurer Ashok Singh warned that party will take action against those who engaged in "anti-party" activities. *—PTI*

NYAY YATRA IN ASSAM

'Cong workers assaulted, vehicles vandalised'

NORTH LAKHIMPUR, 20 JAN

Congress on Saturday alleged that its workers were assaulted, their vehicles vandalised and banners torn in Assam's North Lakhimpur town, through which the Rahul Gandhi-led Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra proceeded. The Yatra, led by Rahul Gandhi, is on its third day's journey in the state and will pass through several parts of Lakhimpur district, including the headquarters town North Lakhimpur, before entering Arunachal Pradesh later in the day.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi during the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra in Lakhimpur, Assam *PHOTO: PTI*

State Congress President Bhupen Kumar Borah said that on Friday night all hoardings and posters put up to welcome the Yatra in the town were torn and party members who had gone to put up the banners were beaten up.

"Two vehicles used by the party to carry the displays were also damaged by miscreants, who also threatened Congress workers of dire consequences if they did not leave at once," he alleged.

- The Yatra, led by Rahul Gandhi, is on its third day's journey in the state and will pass through several parts of Lakhimpur district, including the headquarters town North Lakhimpur

"We have filed two police complaints -- one over beating our workers and damaging the vehicles, and the other over tearing up the posters," he said.

Borah claimed that the car in which the miscreants arrived at the spot belonged to a person who is known to be close to the local BJP MLA.

Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) leader Bharat Narah alleged that most of the banners, posters and hoardings within the North Lakhimpur town area were damaged on Friday night.

"Alarmed at the success of the Yatra, all hoardings and posters have been torn down by miscreants.... ", he said. Congress also shared a video of some persons tearing down posters with Congress leaders' photos. *—PTI*

BSF seizes arms, weapons near Pak border in Punjab

CHANDIGARH, 20 JAN

An AK-47 assault rifle, two magazines and 40 cartridges were seized by the BSF from a field near the India-Pakistan border in Punjab's Ferozepur district, a spokesperson of the force said on Saturday.The seizure was made during a search operation by the Border Security Force on Friday after noticing a drone movement during the intervening night of 18 and 19 January.It resulted in the recovery of a packet wrapped in a white coloured gunnysack, which, besides the arms and ammunition, contained Rs 40,000 cash, the spokesperson said.The vigilant BSF troops successfully thwarted nefarious designs of the terror-mongers from across the border, the official added. *—PTI*

Creator of deepfake video of Rashmika arrested

NEW DELHI, 20 JAN

Delhi Police on Saturday said it has arrested a man in connection with a deepfake video of actor Rashmika Mandanna that was widely circulated on social media. The accused, who is suspected to be the creator of the video, was arrested from south India and has been brought to Delhi, an official said, adding that he was being interrogated.On 10 November, an FIR was registered under Indian Penal Code sections 465 (punishment for forgery) and 469 (forgery for purpose of harming reputation) and sections 66C and 66E of the Information Technology Act at the Intelligence Fusion and Strategic Operations (IFSO) Unit of the Delhi Police's Special Cell.Soon after registering the FIR, the IFSO Unit wrote to Meta to get the URL and other details to identify the accused who made the video and put it on the social media, officials added. *—PTI*

Doctor couple in debt commit suicide in MP

SAGAR, 20 JAN

A doctor couple allegedly committed suicide at their house in Madhya Pradesh's Sagar district on Saturday due to an outstanding debt, police said.Doctors Balbir and Manju Kaithoria were found dead in their house located in Nandan Colony in Bina town, some 70 km from the district headquarters, Bina police station in-charge Bharat Singh Thakur said.The couple's son, who was studying out of town, discovered the bodies when he returned home this morning, he said. Balbir was found hanging from the ceiling fan while his wife's body was on the bed, the official said.Prima facie, it appears that the woman had died after consuming or injecting herself with a poisonous substance, he said.A suicide note was found in the room, in which the couple mentioned that they were worried about an outstanding debt, the official said.The deceased were doctors with the state health department. Balbir was posted at the community health centre in Kurwai, and Manju was a gynaecologist at Bina Civil Hospital, he said. *—PTI*

3 Naxals including 2 women killed in Ch'garh encounter

BIJAPUR, 20 JAN

Three Naxals including two women cadres were killed in an encounter with security forces in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district on Saturday morning, police said. The skirmish took place around 8am in the Belam Gutta hills under the Basaguda police station limits, more than 400km from state capital Raipur, said a senior police official. Personnel of the state police's District Reserve Guard (DRG) and `Commando Battalion for Resolute Action' (CoBRA), an elite unit of the CRPF, were out on an anti-Naxal operation in the area, he said. Security forces had received intelligence inputs about the presence of Naxal cadres of the Madded Area Committee including senior leaders Vinod Verma, Raju Punem, Vishwanath and Guddu Telam in the Balam Nedra forest, the official said. *— PTI*

Ram Mandir lit up ahead of opening

The Ayodhya temple has been decorated with 'rich stocks' of flowers, special lights

AYODHYA, 20 JAN

With just two days to go for the consecration ceremony, the grand Ram temple in Ayodhya has been decorated with "rich stocks" of flowers and special lights for the mega event, officials said on Saturday.

The temple town is in the grip of religious fervour or as the locals say, "Ayodhya Rammay ho rahi hai".

Sources said "rich stocks" of flowers have been used for the decoration and special floral designs have been made to deck up the temple for the big day.

"These are all natural flowers and due to winter can last longer. So they will remain fresh on the day of the consecration ceremony. The fragrance and the aesthetic appeal of these vibrant flowers have lent another layer of divinity to the temple," a source said.

He said separate teams were made for floral decoration and illumination work and they are all working in tandem under the guidance of the trust officials.

Also, decorative lights used for outer illumination are themed on diya, so as to give a traditional look and highlight the ornate elements of the temple.

The new 51-inch idol of Ram Lalla, carved by Mysuru-based sculptor Arun Yogiraj, was placed in the sanctum sanctorum of the Ram Janmabhoomi temple on Thursday afternoon, brought there on a truck earlier.

Visitors will climb 32 steps from the eastern side to reach the main temple.

The temple complex, built in the traditional Nagara style, will be 380 feet long (east-west direction), 250 feet wide and 161 feet high.

Each floor of the temple will be 20 ft high and have a total of 392 pillars and 44 gates. *—PTI*

The temple town is in the grip of religious fervour or as the locals say, "Ayodhya Rammay ho rahi hai" *PHOTO: PTI*

Hindu Sena glued a poster with 'Ayodhya Marg' written over Babar Road signage. *PHOTO: X*

Hindu Sena defaces Babar Road signage

New Delhi, 20 Jan

Fringe outfit which calls itself "Hindu Sena" on Saturday defaced the signage for Babar Road in Central Delhi, demanding that it should be renamed.

Activists of the fringe outfit glued a poster with 'Ayodhya Marg' written on it. An official of New Delhi Municipal Council or NDMC said they are getting the poster removed and will file a police complaint in the matter. *—PTI*

REFRAIN FROM PUBLISHING FALSE CONTENT: GOVT

NEW DELHI, 20 JAN

The government on Saturday issued an advisory to media outlets and social media platforms cautioning them against publishing any false or manipulated content related to the January 22 Ram temple event in Ayodhya.

The advisory, issued by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, said it was observed that certain unverified, provocative and fake messages were being spread, especially on social media, which can disturb communal harmony and public order.

Ahead of the consecration of the idol of Ram Lalla at Ayodhya, many people have received fake messages related to VIP invitations, donation drives and prasaad of the mega event.

The advisory asked newspapers, private satellite TV channels and publishers of news and current affairs on digital media to refrain from publishing and telecasting any content that may be false or manipulated or has the potential to disturb communal harmony or public order in the country. *—PTI*

TISS warns pupils against protests

Mumbai, 20 Jan

The Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) has cautioned its students against holding any protest on its campus here against the idol consecration ceremony of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya on and warned them of action by law-enforcement agencies. The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay, on the other hand, will hold programmes, such as the inauguration of a 'gaushala' (cow shelter) and recitation of a poem based on the epic Ramayan, to mark the occasion. A notice issued by TISS on 18 January said it was brought to the notice of the administration that a few students were planning to organise protests in the old or new campus. *—PTI*

Sec 144 in Noida during 21 to 26 Jan

Noida, 20 Jan

Restrictions under CrPC section 144 will be invoked across Noida and Greater Noida from 21 to 26 January the Gautam Buddh Nagar police said on Saturday. The order came in the wake of the consecration ceremony at the Lord Ram temple in Ayodhya on 22 January and the Republic Day celebrations on 26 January. The restrictions include a ban on unlawful Assembly of five or more people, unauthorised processions and demonstrations among others, according to an order. *—PTI*

CEO DIES IN FREAK ACCIDENT IN HYDERABAD

HYDERABAD, 20 JAN

The CEO of a private firm lost his life, while another official suffered serious injury in a freak accident during the silver jubilee celebrations of the company at Ramoji Film City in Hyderabad, police said on Friday.

During the celebrations on Thursday evening, Vistex CEO Sanjay Shah and his colleague entered into an iron cage, which was to be lowered from a height, when the iron chain supporting it broke on one side, and both of them fell, they said.

They were taken to the hospital but Sanjay Shah died while undergoing treatment, and his colleague's condition is serious, the police said.

The condition of Vishwanath Raj, president of the US-based software company, remained critical, as probe was underway to ascertain the negligence in the tragedy, police said on Saturday.

According to police, 680 employees of the company were present when the accident occurred at about 7.40 on Thursday.

The company had planned to organise the silver jubilee celebrations on 18 and 19 January at the Film City.

Vistex, a multinational software company, has 20 offices across the globe and 2000 plus employees, according to its website.

A case has been registered against the Film City event management authorities based on a complaint lodged by an Executive Director in the company. *—PTI*

Gyanvapi's 'wazukhana' cleared

VARANASI, 20 JAN

The cleaning work of the Wazukhana or ablution area of the Gyanvapi mosque was completed on Saturday under the supervision of the district magistrate of Varanasi, members of both the Hindu and Muslim sides said.

During this work, a large number of police force and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel were present in and around the campus.

The district administration carried the cleaning work following orders of the Supreme Court.

PHOTO: PTI

- Also, all the four litigants from the Hindu side and their advocates as well as the litigants from the Muslim side and their advocates were present.

Advocate of the Hindu side Sudhir Tripathi said the cleaning work started around 9.15am under the supervision of District Magistrate S Rajalingam and continued for about two-and-a- half hours.

A team of 26 people including municipal cleaning workers, fisheries department and fire brigade employees were present in the work.

Also, all the four litigants from the Hindu side and their advocates as well as the litigants from the Muslim side and their advocates were present.

Tripathi said three motor pumps were installed to remove water from the tank built in Wazukhana. After draining the water, the tank was cleaned thoroughly. After cleaning, the washroom was also sealed again.

Secretary of the Intejamia Masajid Committee Mohammad Yasin said after the tank was cleaned, dead fish lying in it were handed over to the Municipal Corporation employees.

He added the administration gave over 40 live fish to him .*—PTI*

Ishrat Jahan, 12 others charged in 2020 Delhi riots

NEW DELHI, 20 JAN

A court here has ordered framing of charges, including those related to attempt to murder and unlawful Assembly, against former Congress councillor Ishrat Jahan, 'United Against Hate' founder Khalid Saifi and 11 others in a 2020 northeast Delhi riots case.

Court, however, discharged all 13 of offences of criminal conspiracy, abetment and common intention and charges under the Arms Act.

Court put the accused on trial, saying their role was "prima facie" established based on the contents of the charge sheet and statements of witnesses.

PHOTO: PTI

"It has come on record that on 26 February, 2020, at about 12.15 pm, a riotous armed mob (unlawful Assembly) including the accused people in the prosecution of their common object had assembled and refused to follow the direction of police to disperse and thrown stones and assaulted police officers while obstructing them in performing their official duties and also fired a gunshot at head constable HC Yograj," the court said.

According to the prosecution, the incident occurred at the Masjidwali Gali in the Khureji Khas area of northeast Delhi.

Court underlined that at the stage of framing the charges, only the "prima facie" case was to be considered and whether the case against the accused was beyond a reasonable doubt would be established after trial. *—PTI*

15 convicted in Ker BJP leader's murder

ALAPPUZHA, 20 JAN

A Kerala court on Saturday found 15 men guilty of killing a BJP OBC wing leader in this coastal district in December 2021.The convicted persons are associated with the now-banned radical Islamist group, Popular Front of India (PFI). Ranjith Sreenivasan, the BJP OBC Morcha state secretary, was brutally attacked and killed in his home on December 19, 2021, in front of his family, allegedly by activists affiliated with PFI and Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI).The verdict was delivered by the Additional District Sessions Court I, Mavelikkara. The quantum of punishment will be pronounced on Monday.The BJP leader's murder occurred just hours after SDPI leader KS Shan was killed by a gang on the night of 18 December while he was returning home .*—PTI*

Raj Bhavan bomb case: NIA files chargesheet

NEW DELHI, 20 JAN

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has filed a charge sheet against one person in the Tamil Nadu Raj Bhavan petrol bomb attack case, officials said on Saturday.

In its report filed before a special court in Chennai on Friday, the agency invoked the stringent IPC section 124, which pertains to an attack on a President or a governor, besides other charges against Vinoth alias Karukka Vinoth, they said.

The accused allegedly hurled two petrol bombs in quick succession at the Raj Bhavan's gate number one in Chennai on 25 October, 2023, which resulted in an explosion and damage to government property.

"This was the fourth such incident involving the accused. Previously, he had thrown petrol bombs at government establishments like the TASMAC (Tamil Nadu State Marketing Corporation) outlet in T Nagar and the Teynampet police station and also the BJP Tamil Nadu state head office in Chennai," an NIA spokesperson said in a statement.

The agency has alleged that Vinoth's motive was to overawe the constitutional authority of the state's governor.

"He had stolen petrol from a bike in SM Nagar, collected empty liquor bottles to fill them with petrol, walked up from Teynampet to Raj Bhavan, and hurled two petrol bombs at the Raj Bhavan gate at around 2.40pm," the spokesperson said. *—PTI*

IndiGo flyers recall harrowing experience on diverted flight

KOLKATA, 20 JAN

Passengers travelling on a Mumbai-Ranchi flight alleged that they had a harrowing experience after it was diverted to Kolkata due to bad weather as the airline staff refused to make arrangements for them after landing despite promising it onboard.

Private carrier IndiGo, however, said that all passengers on board flight 6E-221 on 19 January were provided with meals and given the option of either a refund or an alternate flight.

A passenger on the flight, Vikram Srivastava, shared on social media that they were "falsely promised" hotel stays and alternate flights, and were then deboarded.

"Ground Staff denied everything, excpt fare return in week, rice packet. Regulation allows dumping at 3rd location?" he posted on X. He said that there were pregnant women and elderly people travelling on the plane, but despite it, "the Indigo team declined to help the passengers and asked them to make their own arrangements at a 3rd location".

He also shared a video of an interaction between IndiGo staffers and the angry passengers.

IndiGo responded to Srivastava on X, expressing regret for the inconvenience caused and promising to look into the matter.

When contacted, an official of the airline said, "The flight was diverted to Kolkata due to bad weather at Ranchi, and passengers were given the option of choosing another flight or receiving a refund. While some opted for another flight, others chose a refund. *—PTI*

4 killed, 7 injured in TN road accident

CHENNAI, 20 JAN

Four persons were killed and seven seriously injured when the van in which they were travelling hit a wall at Sethubavachathram in this district, police said on Saturday.

Condoling the death of the four people, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin announced a solatium of Rs 2 lakh each to the kin of the deceased besides relief to the injured.

According to police, the van carrying 11 people from Tuticorin to Velankanni hit the wall near Manora on East Coast Road in Sethubavachathram, late Friday night.

The injured were rushed to Thanjavur Medical College hospital.

The bodies of the deceased were sent to the Government Hospital in Pattukottai for post-mortem, police said.

Expressing his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families, the Chief Minister announced the solatium for the families of Y Pakiyaraj,62, A Gnanammal,60, M Rani,40, and M Chinnapandi,40.

"I am deeply saddened to hear the tragic news. I have ordered to pay Rs 2 lakh each to the families of the deceased, Rs 50,000 each to the severely injured, and Rs 20,000 each to those who sustained simple injuries," Stalin said in a release here.

Also, he directed the health officials to provide special treatment to the injured at the Thanjavur Government Medical College Hospital.*—PTI*

- Asked According to police, the van carrying 11 people from Tuticorin to Velankanni hit the wall near Manora on East Coast Road.

EAM holds talks with Palestinian counterpart

KAMPALA, 20 JAN

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Saturday met with Pales tine's Foreign Minister Dr Riyad al-Maliki here and held a "detailed and comprehensive discussion" on the ongoing conflict in the Gaza Strip.

Jaishankar is here in the Ugandan capital to attend the two-day Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit, which began on Friday.

The meeting comes a day after Jaishankar, in his address at the NAM summit, reiterated India's support for a two-state solution. "The conflict in Gaza is understandably uppermost in our minds. This humanitarian crisis requires a sustainable solution that gives immediate relief to those most affectd," he had said. Jaishankar advocated a two-state solution where the Palestinian people can live within secure border

Jaishankar *PHOTO: PTI*

EAM calls on Sri Lankan President

Jaishankar on Saturday called on Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe and discussed the progress of bilateral initiatives. India's Neighbourhood First policy guides its approach towards the management of relations with countries in its immediate neighbourhood. *—PTI*

IN KERALA

Fishermen turn saviours of endangered marine giants

T'PURAM,20 JAN

Two days ago, local fishermen on the coastal shores of Kerala released a massive whale shark that had been entangled in their nets, lingering near the shore for over 13 hours.

"Everyone presumed the shark was lifeless, and forest department officials were prepared for a post-mortem examination. However, I observed movement in its tail, and local fishermen assisted us in returning the shark to the sea," said Ajith Shanghumugham, a local fisherman, recounting the incident from the Puthenthope coast in Thiruvananthapuram district.

PHOTO: PTI

Shanmughan, along with fellow fisherman Ramesh, used their boat to successfully tow the shark back to deep waters, dedicating an extended period at sea to ensure its safe return and overall well-being.

He serves as the field officer of the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI), an NGO working for the conservation of wildlife in India, for the Save the Whale Shark campaign. He attributes the successful rescue of the shark to the awareness generated through the 'Save the Whale Shark' campaign, led by the WTI in collaboration with the Kerala Forest Department and Fisheries Department.

The campaign has heightened awareness within the community regarding the crucial need to conserve the endangered migratory shark species.

WTI is compensating the fishermen who release the whale sharks back into the wild. *—PTI*

MARCH FOR LIFE

Anti-abortion activists participate in the annual March for Life in front of the Supreme Court on Friday, in Washington. ***PHOTO: PTI***

Women and children bear the brunt of war, says UN

Women and children are the main victims in the Israel-Hamas war, with some 16,000 killed and an estimated two mothers losing their lives every hour since Hamas' surprise attack on Israel, the United Nations agency promoting gender equality said Friday.

As a result of the more than 100-day conflict, UN Women added, at least 3,000 women may have become widows and heads of households and at least 10,000 children may have lost their fathers.

In a report released Friday, the agency pointed to gender inequality and the burden on women fleeing the fighting with children and being displaced again and again. Of the territory's 2.3 million population, it said, 1.9 million are displaced and "close to one million are women and girls" seeking shelter and safety.

UN Women's executive director, Sima Bahous, said this is "a cruel inversion" of fighting during the 15 years before the Hamas attack on 7 October. Previously, she said, 67 per ecnt of all civilians killed in Gaza and the West Bank were men and less then 14 per cent were women.

She echoed UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' calls for a humanitarian ceasefire and the immediate release of all hostages taken captive in Israel on 7 October.

"However much we mourn the situation of the women and girls of Gaza today, we will mourn further tomorrow without unrestricted humanitarian assistance and an end to the destruction and killing," Bahous said in a statement accompanying the report.

"These women and girls are deprived of safety, medicine, health care, and shelter. They face imminent starvation and famine. Most of all they are deprived of hope and justice," she said.

The health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza says nearly 25,000 Palestinians have been killed in the conflict, 70 per cent of them women and children.

The United Nations says more than a half million people in Gaza — a quarter of the population — are starving.

At least 3,000 women may have become widows and heads of households and at least 10,000 children may have lost their fathers ***PHOTO: PTI***

In Israel, around 1,200 people were killed during the 7 October attack by Hamas that sparked the war, and some 250 people were taken hostage by militants. More than 100 hostages are believed to still be held captive in Gaza.

Bahous said UN Women had heard "shocking accounts of unconscionable sexual violence during the attacks" by Hamas, and she echoed UN calls for accountability, justice and support for all those affected.

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Despite escalating hostilities in Gaza, the agency said women-led and women's rights organizations continue to operate. It found that 83 per cent of women's organizations surveyed in the Gaza Strip are at least partially operational, mainly focusing on the emergency response to the war.

But UN Women said its analysis of funding from last year's flash appeal for Gaza found that just 0.09 per cent of funding went directly to national or local women's rights organisations.

Bahous said there is a need for much more aid to get to Gaza, especially to women and children, and for an end to the war.

"This is a time for peace," she said. "We owe this to all Israeli and Palestinian women and girls. This is not their conflict. They must no longer pay its price." *—AP/PTI*

SALAR ساڈا

'Climate change to cut labour productivity by 40%'

Labour productivity could fall as low as 40 per cent in countries like India and Pakistan by the end of the century due to climate change, threatening global food production, according to a study.

The research, published in the journal Global Change Biology, predicts that other regions in Southeast and South Asia, West and Central Africa, and northern South America are expected to see physical work capacity reduced to 70 per cent.

"Assessments consistently conclude that climate change will reduce crop yields making food security challenges worse," said study lead Gerald Nelson, a professor at the University of Illinois, US.

"But it's not only crops and livestock that are affected. The agricultural workers who plant, till, and harvest much of the food we need will also suffer due to heat exposure, reducing their ability to undertake work in the field," Nelson said.

The study involved using computational models to predict the physical work capacity (PWC)—defined as "an individual's work capacity relative to an environment without any heat stress"—under different predicted climate change scenarios.

The models, developed by Loughborough University, UK, are based on data from more than 700 heat stress trials—which involved observing people working in a wide range of temperatures and humidities, and differing weather conditions, including sunshine and wind.

The maximum work capacity achievable by individuals in a cool climate was used as the benchmark for the study—representing 100 per cent physical work capacity, the researchers said.

The agricultural workers who plant, till, and harvest much of the food will also suffer due to heat exposure ***PHOTO: PIXABAY***

> The study involved using computational models to predict the physical work capacity (PWC)—defined as "an individual's work capacity relative to an environment without any heat stress under different predicted climate change scenarios

Reductions in capacity mean people are limited in what they can physically do, even if they are motivated to work. This may translate as farmers needing extra workers to do the same job, or if these are not available, then reducing their crop sizes, they said.

The study shows that agricultural workers are already feeling the heat, with half the world's cropland farmers estimated to be working below 86 per cent capacity in "recent past" (1991–2010) climate conditions.

The researchers also considered potential adaptations to mitigate the impact of climate change on agricultural workers.

Switching to nighttime or shade work to reduce direct solar radiation, was shown to lead to a five to 10 per cent improvement in worker productivity, they said.

A second option is to increase the global use of mechanical machinery and equipment, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, where agricultural practices largely involve hard physical labor, according to the researchers. *—PTI*

The researchers also considered potential adaptations to mitigate the impact of climate change on agricultural workers ***PHOTO: PIXABAY***

LETTERS

Write to us at salar@salar.news

Can quantum physics unravel the secrets of human behaviour?

Human behaviour is an enigma that fascinates many scientists. And there has been much discussion over the role of probability in explaining how our minds work.

Probability is a mathematical framework designed to tell us how likely an event is to occur – and works well for many everyday situations. For example, it describes the outcome of a coin toss as ½ – or 50% – because throwing either heads or tails is equally probable.

Yet research has shown that human behaviour can't be fully captured by these traditional or "classical" laws of probability. Could it instead be explained by the way probability works in the more mysterious world of quantum mechanics?

Mathematical probability is also a vital component of quantum mechanics, the branch of physics that describes how nature behaves at the scale of atoms or sub-atomic particles. However, as we'll see, in the quantum world, probabilities follow very different rules.

Discoveries over the last two decades have shed light on a crucial role for "quantumness" in human cognition – how the human brain processes information to acquire knowledge or understanding.

These findings also have potential implications for the development of artificial intelligence (AI).

Human 'irrationality'

Nobel laureate Daniel Kahnemann and other cognitive scientists have carried out work on what they describe as the "irrationality" of human behaviour. When behavioural patterns do not strictly follow the rules of classical probability theory from a mathematical perspective, they are deemed "irrational".

For example, a study found that a majority of students who have passed an end-of-term exam favour going on holiday afterwards. Likewise, a majority of those who have failed also want to go for a holiday.

If a student doesn't know their result, classical probability would predict that they would opt for the holiday because it is the preferred option whether they have passed or failed. Yet in the experiment, a majority of students preferred not to go on holiday if they didn't know how they'd done.

Discoveries over the last two decades have shed light on a crucial role for "quantumness" in human cognition – how the human brain processes information to acquire knowledge or understanding ***PHOTO: PIXABAY***

Intuitively, it's not hard to understand that students might not want to go on holiday if they are going to be worrying about their exam results the whole time. But classical probability does not accurately capture the behaviour, so it is described as irrational. Many similar violations of classical probability rules have been observed in cognitive science.

Quantum brain?

In classical probability, when a sequence of questions is asked, then the answers do not depend on the order in which the questions are posed. By contrast, in quantum physics, the answers to a series of questions can depend crucially on the order in which they are asked.

One example is the measurement of the spin of an electron in two different directions. If you first measure the spin in the horizontal direction and then in the vertical direction, you will get one outcome.

The outcomes will generally be different when the order is reversed, because of a well known feature of quantum mechanics. Simply measuring a property of a quantum system can affect the thing that's being measured (in this case an electron's spin) and hence the outcome of any subsequent experiments.

Order dependence can also be seen in human behaviour. For example, in a study published 20 years ago about the effects that question order has on respondents' answers, subjects were asked whether they thought the previous US president, Bill Clinton, was honest. They were then asked if his vice president, Al Gore, seemed honest

When the questions were delivered in this order, a respective 50% and 60% of respondents answered that they were honest. But when the researchers asked respondents about Gore first and then Clinton, a respective 68% and 60% responded that they were honest.

On an everyday level, it might seem that human behaviour is not consistent because it often violates the rules of classical probability theory. However, this behaviour does appear to fit with the way probability works in quantum mechanics.Observations of this kind have led cognitive scientist Jerome Busemeyer and many others to recognise that quantum mechanics can, on the whole, explain human behaviour in a more consistent way. Based on this astonishing hypothesis, a new research field called "quantum cognition" has arisen within the area of cognitive sciences.How it is possible that thought processes are dictated by quantum rules? Is our brain working like a quantum computer? No one yet knows the answers, but the empirical data strongly appears to suggest that our thoughts follow quantum rules

Dynamic behaviour

In parallel to these exciting developments, over the past two decades my collaborators and I have developed a framework for modelling – or simulating – the dynamics of people's cognitive behaviour as they digest "noisy" (that is, imperfect) information from the outside world.We again found that mathematical techniques developed for modelling the quantum world could be applied to modelling how the human brain processes noisy data.These principles can be applied to other behaviour in biology, beyond just the brain. Green plants, for example, have the remarkable ability to extract and analyse chemical and other information from their environments and to adapt to changes.My rough estimate, based on a recent experiment on common bean plants, suggests that they can process this external information more efficiently than the best computer we have today.In this context, efficiency means that the plant is consistently able to reduce the uncertainty about its external environment to the greatest extent possible in its circumstances. This could, for example, encompass easily detecting the direction that light is coming from, so that the plant can grow towards it. The efficient processing of information by an organism is also linked to saving energy, which is important for its survival.Similar rules may apply to the human brain, particularly to how our state of mind changes when detecting outside signals.

—Courtesy, The Conversation

PHOTO: PTI

Nepal asks Russia not to recruit its nationals into army

KATHMANDU, 19 JAN

Nepal has requested Russia to not admit Nepalese nationals into the Russian Army and help repatriate those who have already joined the country's forces to fight the war in Ukraine. At least 200 Nepalese youths have joined the Russian Army through illegal channels and 12 of them have already lost their lives while fighting against Ukraine. Nepalese Foreign Minister NP Saud, during his meeting with Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Vershinin Sergey Vasilievich on Friday at the sideline of the ongoing Non-Aligned Summit in Kampala, Uganda, asked Russia "not to recruit Nepalese nationals into the country's Army and to help repatriate those who have already joined the forces", according to the private secretariat of Saud. *—PTI*

Baby dies after being burned by leaked steam

NEW YORK, 20 JAN

An 11-month-old baby died Friday after being burned by steam leaking from a radiator inside a Brooklyn apartment, according to New York City police. Officers responding to a 911 call shortly after 6 a.m. found the boy unconscious in an apartment bedroom, where steam continued to spew from the heating unit, police said. He was taken to a hospital, where he was pronounced dead. An investigation was underway, police said. A radiator malfunction was blamed for the deaths of two young sisters who suffered steam burns in a New York City apartment in 2016. *—AP*

Trump renews call for mistrial in defamation case

WASHINGTON, 20 JAN

Donald Trump's lawyer on Friday renewed a mistrial request in a New York defamation case against the former President, saying that an advice columnist who accused him of sexually abusing her in the 1990s spoiled her civil case by deleting emails from strangers who threatened her with death. Attorney Alina Habba told a judge in a letter that writer E Jean Carroll's trial was ruined when Habba elicited from Carroll through her questions that Carroll had deleted an unknown number of social media messages containing death threats. She said Carroll "failed to take reasonable steps to preserve relevant evidence. In fact, she did much worse — she actively deleted evidence which she now attempts to rely on in establishing her damages claim." When Habba first made the mistrial request with Trump sitting beside her as Carroll was testifying on Wednesday. *—AP*

Alec Baldwin faces new charges over 'Rust' shooting

MEXICO CITY, 20 JAN

A grand jury in New Mexico has charged Alec Baldwin with a fresh count of involuntary manslaughter over a fatal movie set shooting in October 2021. Previous charges against the Emmy award-winning actor were dropped last April, just two weeks before a criminal trial against him was due to begin. Baldwin, 65, was practicing firing a Colt .45 pistol before filming a scene for Rust, an upcoming Western film shot near Santa Fe, in October 2021. But the gun went off, striking 42-year-old cinematographer Halyna Hutchins and wounding director Joel Souza. The actor has maintained he did not pull the trigger. He has also argued he is not at fault for Hutchins' death because he did not know the weapon contained live rounds and because no live ammunition was supposed to be on set. ***—BBC News***

US jets strike Yemen Houthis for 6th time

F/A 18 jets destroyed 3 ready-to-launch anti-ship missiles aimed at attacking ships in Red Sea

JERUSALEM/ ZURICH/ TEL AVIV, 19 JAN

The US fighter jets struck Houthi rebel sites in Yemen for the sixth time Friday, taking out anti-ship missile launchers that were prepared to fire.

The Iranian-backed Houthis say their attacks on global shipping in the Red Sea corridor are aimed at stopping Israel's war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Now in its fourth month, the war has raised the temperature on tensions across the Middle East.

In Israel, a member of the country's War Cabinet said only a ceasefire deal can win the release of dozens of hostages held by Hamas in Gaza. The televised comments by former army chief Gadi Eisenkot on Thursday were the latest sign of a growing rift among political and military leaders over the direction of Israel's war. The official said the strikes were carried out by F/A-18 aircraft off the USS Dwight D Eisenhower aircraft carrier. Al-Masirah, a Houthi-run satellite news channel, said Friday that there were air raids in the western port city of Hodieda on Friday, targeting the al-Jabaana neighbourhood in the west of the city.

Israeli soldiers overlook the Gaza Strip from a tank, as seen from southern Israel, Friday ***PHOTO: AP***

Biden and Netanyahu's hold talks

Biden spoke Friday with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in the leaders' first call in almost a month amid sharp disagreements over what should happen in Gaza after the ongoing war concludes. The White House said they discussed "the latest developments in Israel and Gaza." It comes a day after Netanyahu reiterated his opposition to a Palestinian state, which the US has insisted is necessary to bring about a sustainable peace.

Scuffles on Tel Aviv highway as hostages' families protest

Israeli police scuffled with relatives of hostages held by Hamas after the group of family members blocked a major Tel Aviv highway, a sign of growing tensions over the government's lack of visible progress in reaching a new deal to secure the hostages' release.

Footage showed demonstrators holding up signs reading "Deal Now" as they faced long lines of cars. Eventually, police showed up and scuffled with some of the demonstrators, pushing them. *—PTI*

2 mothers are killed in Gaza every hour: UN

RAFAH, 20 JAN

Women and children are the main victims the Gaza war, with some 16,000 killed and an estimated two mothers losing their lives every hour since 7 October, the UN agency promoting gender equality said.

As a result of the more than 100-day conflict, UN Women added, at least 3,000 women may have become widows and heads of households and at least 10,000 children may have lost their fathers.

In a report released Friday, the agency pointed to gender inequality and the burden on women fleeing the fighting with children and being displaced again and again. Of the territory's 2.3 million population, it said, 1.9 million are displaced and close to one million are women and girls seeking shelter and safety.

UN Women's executive director, Sima Bahous, said this is a cruel inversion of fighting during the 15 years. Previously, she said, 67 per cent of all civilians killed in Gaza and the West Bank were men and less than 14 per cent were women. The health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza says nearly 25,000 Palestinians have been killed in the conflict. The United Nations says more than a half million people in Gaza a quarter of the population are starving. *—AP*

UN added that 3,000 women become widows ***PHOTO: AFP***

ISRAELI STRIKE ON DAMASCUS KILLS FIVE

DAMASCUS, 20 JAN

An Israeli strike on the Syrian capital, Damascus, destroyed Saturday a building used by Iranian paramilitary Revolutionary Guard killing and wounding 10 people, state media outlets and an official with an Iran-backed group said.

An opposition war monitor, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, said at least five people were killed in the missile attack that struck when officials from Iran-backed groups were holding a meeting. State-TV reported that the "Israeli aggression" targeted a residential building in the tightly guarded western Damascus neighbourhood of Mazzeh, home to several diplomatic missions, including the Lebanese and Iranian embassies. An official with an Iran-backed group in the Middle East told that the building was used by Revolutionary Guard officials. *—AP*

Biden signs bill to avoid a partial govt shutdown

WASHINGTON, 20 JAN

President Joe Biden on Friday signed a short-term spending bill that keeps the federal government operating until early March.

The bill averts what would've been a partial government shutdown starting Saturday. It does not address additional aid for Ukraine, which remains in limbo as key legislators continue to negotiate a border security measure that would go in tandem with more support for Kyiv.

Congress, ahead of the winter snowstorm that struck Washington, D.C., on Friday, passed the short-term bill with large bipartisan majorities on Thursday. The vote was 77-18 in the Senate and 314-108 in the House.

Under the bill, funding for agencies overseeing agriculture, veterans affairs, energy, transportation and housing runs through 1 March. Funding for the rest of the federal government now runs through 8 March. It's meant to buy lawmakers extra time to draft full-year spending bills through the end of the fiscal year on Sept. 30.

Joe Biden ***PHOTO: AP***

Speaker Mike Johnson, will continue to face pressure from House conservatives who want him to abandon a bipartisan agreement that sets overall spending levels for those full-year bills at $1.66 trillion. Those conservatives say that is too much money, but Democrats and moderate Republicans say Congress must abide by that deal and avoid legislative dysfunction during an election year. *—AP*

PANNUN MURDER PLOT

Czech court rules Indian can be extradited to US

PRAGUE, 20 JAN

A Czech high court has ruled that Indian national Nikhil Gupta, detained in a prison here on murder-for-hire charges in an alleged assassination attempt on a Khalistani extremist on American soil, can be extradited to the US, according to local media reports.

Gupta, 52, was charged by US federal prosecutors in an indictment unsealed in November last year with working with an Indian government employee in an alleged plot to kill Khalistani separatist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, who holds dual US and Canadian citizenships, on American soil.

Gupta, arrested in the Czech Republic on 30 June last year, is currently held in Prague's Pankrak prison. The Prague High Court confirmed in a closed session that Gupta can be extradited to the US, the Seznam.cz web portal reported on Friday.

Pannun ***PHOTO: REUTERS***

- Gupta, arrested in the Czech Republic on 30 June last year, is currently held in Prague.

Prague High Court's order came as it rejected Gupta's appeal against a December decision by a lower court that ruled that extradition was allowed.

A spokesman for the Prague High Court declined to immediately comment.

Minister of Justice Pavel Blazek now has the final say on whether Gupta will be extradited to the US.

He has yet to give his consent to the extradition, the portal reported.

Gupta's lawyer Petr Slepicka at the Prague High Court said they will still file a complaint with the Constitutional Court.

Gupta claimed that his case had a political or military background.

In the indictment, US investigators claimed that Gupta was hired by an Indian government agent.

According to Slepicka, it was supposed to be a "task" most likely financed by the Indian government. But High Court rejected this claim.

According to Judge Vladimir Kral, this case cannot be viewed as a political case.

"It is absurd to think that a state that presents itself as democratic and governed by the legal order and international treaties would choose such means as the murder of a citizen of another state on its territory to solve its problems and in time of peace," the portal quoted the judge as saying. *—PTI*

Iran launches satellite amid growing tensions

JERUSALEM, 20 JAN

Iran said Saturday it had conducted a successful satellite launch into its highest orbit yet, the latest for a programme the West fears improves Tehran's ballistic missiles.

The announcement comes as heightened tensions grip the wider Middle East over Israel's ongoing war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip, and just days after Iran and Pakistan engaged in tit-for-tat airstrikes in each others' countries.

The Soraya satellite was placed in an orbit at some 750 km above the Earth's surface with its three-stage Qaem 100 rocket, the state-run IRNA news agency said. It did not immediately acknowledge what the satellite did, though telecommunications minister Isa Zarepour described the launch as having a 50kg payload.

The launch was part of Iran's Revolutionary Guards' space program alongside Iran's civilian space program, the report said.

There was no immediate independent confirmation Iran had successfully put the satellite in orbit.

The United States has previously said Iran's satellite launches defy a UN Security Council resolution and called on Tehran to undertake no activity involving ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons. UN sanctions related to Iran's ballistic missile program expired last October.

The US said the development of satellite launch vehicles "shortens the timeline" for Iran to develop an intercontinental ballistic missile because it uses similar technology.

Intercontinental ballistic missiles can be used to deliver nuclear weapons. Iran is now producing uranium close to weapons-grade levels after the collapse of its nuclear deal with world powers. Tehran has enough enriched uranium for "several" nuclear weapons, if it chooses to produce them, the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency repeatedly has warned.

Iran has always denied seeking nuclear weapons and says its space program, like its nuclear activities, is for purely civilian purposes. *—AP*

More than 100,000 people had gathered in the area that night. ***PHOTO: AFP***

China: 21 killed in 2 fire accidents

BEIJING, 20 JAN

At least 21 people, including school students, were killed in two separate fire incidents in China, local authorities said on Saturday.

In the first accident, 13 students were confirmed killed in a fire that took place at the Yingcai School in Henan Province's Yanshanpu village on Friday night.

The local fire department received an alarm about the fire at the school at 11 pm local time Friday night.

Rescuers arrived at the scene quickly and the flames were extinguished at around 11.30 pm.

One person injured in the fire is currently receiving treatment at the hospital and is in stable condition, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

All of the dead were third-grade students, a teacher told Zonglan News, a state-backed media outlet from Hebei province.

Local authorities have launched an investigation into the cause of the fire.

In another incident, eight people were killed in a fire following a dust explosion at a production workshop in Changzhou City, east China's Jiangsu Province on early Saturday morning.

The explosion took place at 3.38 am. It also resulted in minor injuries to eight people, according to the district's emergency management department. *—PTI*

The Soraya satellite was placed in an orbit at some 750 km above the Earth's surface ***PHOTO: AP***

S Korea cop charged over Halloween crush

SEOUL, 20 JAN

Seoul's chief of police has been charged with negligence more than a year after a Halloween crush left 159 young people dead in South Korea.

Kim Kwang-ho is the highest-ranking police official to be charged in relation to the tragedy, according to local media reports.

He is accused of failing to ensure there were enough officers in Itaewon, central Seoul, on 29 October 2022.

More than 100,000 people had gathered in the area that night.

Some of the victims' relatives have welcomed the charge, but said it should have happened earlier and called on the police chief to step down immediately and face trial.

Kim, head of the Seoul Metropolitan Police Agency, was off duty and at home on 29 October when the tragedy unfolded. According to authorities, some 137 officers had been deployed on the ground at Itaewon that night.

The officers were vastly outnumbered by the tens of thousands of, mainly young, people who had gathered in the narrow alleyways of the Itaewon entertainment district.

The first indication something was wrong back in 2022 came just after 6.30 pm, several hours before the deadly crush took place in an alley off the main road.

Most of the people who lost their lives that night were in their 20s.

A report released in January 2023 said local municipal and emergency service officials were responsible for weak planning and a poor emergency response.

It found that no preventive measures were taken in advance, and appropriate measures were not taken after emergency calls for help were received. *—BBC News*

ELECTION-YEAR POLITICS

Republican rift a threat to border deal

WASHINGTON, 20 JAN

A politically treacherous dynamic is taking hold as negotiators in Congress work to strike a bipartisan deal on the border and immigration, with vocal opposition from the hard right and former president Donald Trump threatening to topple the carefully negotiated compromise.

Senators are closing in on the details of an agreement on border measures that could unlock Republican support for Ukraine aid and hope to unveil it as soon as next week. But the deal is already wobbling, as House Speaker Mike Johnson faces intense pressure from Trump and his House allies to demand more sweeping concessions from Democrats and the White House.

It's a familiar political dynamic, one that has repeatedly thwarted attempts to reform US immigration law, including in 2013 when House Republicans sought to pin illegal immigration on a Democratic president and in 2018 when Trump helped sink another bipartisan effort. The path for legislation this time around is further clouded by an election year in which Trump has once again made railing against illegal immigration a central focus of his campaign. Even though the terms of the policy negotiations have shifted significantly in the Republicans' direction, scepticism is running high among conservatives, creating a precarious moment that could determine not only the contours of US immigration and border law for years to come, but the future of Ukraine as it faces dwindling US supplies in its fight against Russia.

The number of migrants who have come to the US border during Biden's term is seen as one of the largest vulnerabilities ***PHOTO: AP***

President Joe Biden is pressing lawmakers to say yes. During a White House meeting this week with congressional leaders that was meant to underscore how desperately Ukraine needs funding, the president said he was ready for a "big deal on the border".

The President has reason to want an agreement. The historic number of migrants who have come to the US border with Mexico during Biden's term is seen as one of the largest political vulnerabilities in his re-election campaign. During Iowa's Republican caucuses last week, which Trump won, immigration was a top issue. An AP VoteCast survey found about nine in 10 caucusgoers backed building a wall along the US-Mexico border, with about seven in 10 expressing strong support for the idea.

As asylum seekers have made their way across the country, often by the busloads to Democratic-leaning cities as part of Texas Governor Greg Abbott's programme, they have strained the resources and political tolerance of areas that will be vital to Biden's re-election chances. *—AP*

RUSSIAN HACKERS BREACH EMAILS OF MICROSOFT

WASHINGTON, 20 JAN

State-backed Russian hackers broke into Microsoft's corporate email system and accessed the accounts of members of the company's leadership team, as well as those of employees on its cybersecurity and legal teams, the company said Friday.

In a blog post, Microsoft said the intrusion began in late November and was discovered on 12 January. It said the same highly skilled Russian hacking team behind the SolarWinds breach was responsible. "A small percentage" of Microsoft corporate accounts were accessed, the company said, and some emails and attached documents were stolen. A company spokesperson said Microsoft had no immediate comment on which or how many members of its senior leadership had their email accounts breached. *—AP*

Govt suspends 3 directors of SAIL, NMDC

NEW DELHI, 20 JAN

The Steel Ministry has suspended two board-level officials of steel PSU SAIL and one director of iron ore major NMDC for alleged misconduct, according to exchange filings by the companies.SAIL also has suspended 26 other officials with immediate effect for violation of its code of conduct, the steel PSU said in a filing to BSE.The filing said the Ministry of Steel vide its letters dated January 19, 2024, "in exercise of the powers conferred by sub-rule (1) of Rule 20 of the Conduct, Discipline and Appeal Rules, 1977 of Steel Authority of India Limited, has placed V.S. Chakravarthy, Director (Commercial) and A.K. Tulsiani, Director (Finance) on suspension with immediate effect". SAIL, under the Ministry of Steel, is the country's largest steel-making company, while NMDC is India's largest iron ore producing entity. *—PTI*

IDBI Bank Q3 net profit jumps 57% to ₹1,458cr

NEW DELHI, 20 JAN

IDBI Bank on Saturday reported a 57 per cent growth in net profit to Rs 1,458 crore in the third quarter ended December 31, on lower provisioning and better interest income. The LIC-controlled bank had a net profit of Rs 927 crore in the October-December quarter of 2022. The bank's interest income improved during the third quarter of the current fiscal to Rs 6,541 crore, as against Rs 5,231 crore in the same period last fiscal.The gross non-performing asset (NPA) ratio improved to 4.69 per cent as on December 31, 2023, as against 13.82 per cent as on 31 December, 2022.Similarly, the net NPA also declined to 0.34 per cent, as compared to 1.08 per cent at the end of December 2022.As a result provisioning and contingencies came down to Rs 320 crore in the December quarter, from Rs 784 crore in the same quarter of the last fiscal.Provision Coverage Ratio (including Technical Write-Offs) stood at 99.17 per cent as on December 31, 2023.During the quarter Capital Adequacy Ratio of the bank improved to 20.32 per cent, as compared to 20.14 per cent at the end of December 2022.The bank has not raised capital during the December quarter and the earlier funds have been fully utilised, it said.The government, which owns over 45 per cent stake in IDBI Bank, plans to sell its stake in the bank and the process could gather pace next financial year. Meanwhile, life insurance behemoth LIC, which has a 49.24 per cent shareholding, is keen to hold strategic stake in the bank so that it can enjoy the benefit of bancassurance channel. *—PTI*

J&K Bank Q3 net profit jumps 35% to ₹421 cr

NEW DELHI, 20 JAN

J&K Bank on Saturday reported a 35 per cent rise in net profit to Rs 421 crore in the third quarter ended on December 2023 on the back of a decline in bad loans and improvement in core income.The bank had earned a net profit of Rs 311 crore in the October-December quarter of 2022. The total income of the bank increased to Rs 3,063 crore in the quarter as compared to Rs 2,682 crore in the December quarter of the previous fiscal, J&K Bank said in a regulatory filing.The bank's interest income rose during the third quarter of the current fiscal to Rs 2,881 crore, as against Rs 2,441 crore in the same period last fiscal. The gross non-performing asset (NPA) ratio improved to 4.84 per cent as of 31 December, 2023, as against 7.25 per cent as of 31 December, 2022.Similarly, the net NPA also declined to 0.63 per cent as compared to 2.08 per cent at the end of December 2022. Provision coverage ratio as of December 31, 2023, is 91.61 per cent without taking into account the floating provision of Rs.124.48 crore held by the bank which is part of Tier-II capital, it said. *—PTI*

Sensex, Nifty end lower; FMCG, IT stocks top drags

Nifty declined 50.60 points or 0.23 per cent to 21,571.80.

MUMBAI, 20 JAN

Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty pared initial gains and settled lower on Saturday due to selling in FMCG and IT shares.

The 30-share BSE Sensex fell by 259.58 points or 0.36 per cent to settle at 71,423.65 as 24 of its components declined and six advanced.

The Nifty declined 50.60 points or 0.23 per cent to 21,571.80.

Among the Sensex firms, Kotak Bank, PowerGrid, ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank, PowerGrid were the major gainers.

HUL, TCS, M&M, IndusInd Bank, HCL Tech were among the losers.

"Amid rising optimism about AI, US markets surged over the weekend. However, domestic markets exhibited a subdued trend influenced by extended holidays, low volumes, and weekly option expiration," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services said.

Profit booking was noted in IT and FMCG, while private banks witnessed selective buying post the recent sharp correction and stable Q3 earnings, Nair added.

Among sectors, FMCG and IT stocks suffered the most, while banks and financial services gained.

Shares of HUL and Reliance Industries were under pressure after their December quarter results.

Reliance Industries shares settled 0.80 per cent down at Rs 2713.20 on BSE post its third quarter earnings announcement on Friday.

The company posted a 9 per cent rise in its December quarter net profit as a planned maintenance-induced weakness in oil business earnings was offset by stability in retail and telecom verticals.

The stock of HUL was closed 3.72 per cent down at Rs 2469.30 apiece.

Hindustan Unilever Ltd on Friday reported an 1.08 per cent increase in consolidated net profit at Rs 2,508 crore in the third quarter ended December 2023.

On Friday, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 496.37 points or 0.70 per cent to settle at 71,683.23 points. The Nifty climbed 160.15 points or 0.75 per cent to close at 21,622.40 points.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 3,689.68 crore on Friday, according to exchange data.

NSE and BSE on Friday announced holding normal trading sessions on Saturday as stock markets are closed on January 22 amid a half-day holiday declared by banks. Money markets and forex trading will also be closed on Monday. *—PTI*

Among sectors, FMCG and IT stocks suffered the most, while banks and financial services gained *PHOTO: X*

- NSE and BSE on Friday announced holding normal trading sessions on Saturday as stock markets are closed on January 22 amid a half-day holiday declared by banks. Money markets and forex trading will also be closed on Monday

CENTRE TO SC

Court said, it wants appropriate safeguards to protect the common man from frauds and misuse of cryptocurrencies *PHOTO: X*

'Yet to finalise regulation on cryptocurrency'

NEW DELHI, 20 JAN

Centre has told the Supreme Court it is yet to take a decision on a mechanism to regulate cryptocurrencies and effectively investigate related offences.

A bench of justices Surya Kant and KV Viswanathan was told by Additional Solicitor General Vikramjit Banerjee, appearing for the Centre, that the issues related to the digital currency are continuously evolving and the government is deliberating on the mechanism to regulate the cryptocurrencies.

He sought time to file an affidavit by the next date of hearing in the case giving updated position on the mechanism.

"So far as the stance of the Union of India with reference to the matters of cryptocurrency arising in different states is concerned, the Additional Solicitor General of India seeks and is granted four weeks' time to file an appropriate affidavit," the bench ordered on Friday.

During the hearing, Justice Kant said the court only wants that there are appropriate safeguards to protect the common man from frauds and misuse of cryptocurrencies.

"We are not experts on what kind of currencies you should have or regulate. If there is no mechanism to regulate it, then anyone can create a currency and start transacting in it. It will be very dangerous," the bench told Banerjee.

The bench posted the matter for further hearing on 21 March.

It was hearing a bail plea of one Ganesh Shiv Kumar Sagar booked for cryptocurrencies fraud in various states like Jharkhand, Maharashtra and Gujarat. He has also sought clubbing of various FIR lodges against him in different states.

The top court made the interim protection from arrest granted to him on 27 July, 2023 as absolute after counsel for the Jharkhand government submitted that he has joined the probe into the case and fully cooperating with the investigating officer.

The counsel for Sagar submitted that he undertakes to continue to appear before the Investigating Officer as and when required till the investigation reaches a logical conclusion.

On 21 September, 2023, Attorney General R Venkataramani, appearing for the Centre, said that the matter requires in depth consideration at the level of the Union of India keeping in view the domestic and international perspective.He had submitted that due deliberations will be made within two-three months and this Court shall be apprised with the outcome at the earliest. *—PTI*

According to the report, the total applications for tier-II and III cities in 2023 were 3.2 crore, of which 1 crore were from women *PHOTO: PTI*

'1cr job applications from women in tier-II, III cities'

MUMBAI, 20 JAN

The number of women striving to join the active workforce in the tier-II and III cities witnessed a 13 per cent growth in 2023 with 1 crore applications, a report said on Saturday.

In 2022, there were 2.7 crore applications from tier-II and III cities, of which 87 lakh were from women looking for financial independence, according to data from jobs and professional networking platform apna.co.

According to the report, the total applications for tier-II and III cities in 2023 were 3.2 crore, of which 1 crore were from women, the report said.

Over 100 job applications per minute from women in tier-II and III cities signal a turning point in workforce dynamics, the report said. Over 80 per cent of these applications are for office-based roles, underlining the eagerness of women to engage in the workplace physically, refusing to let the option of working from home limit their career growth, it revealed. The report by apna.co is based on an analysis of data of job applications and postings on its platform in 2022 and 2023. There has been a ten-fold increase in managerial job postings in sales support, enterprise sales, advertising, real estate, inside sales, brand and marketing and e-commerce, as per the report. "Applications pouring in from women in tier II-III cities... totaling 1 crore. The surge reflects the unstoppable rise of women in reshaping our workforce," apna.co founder and CEO Nirmit Parikh said.

The report added that the job market in the smaller cities is witnessing a growth in freshers hiring with 60 per cent of job postings in tier-II and III cities specifically targeting those new to the workforce. *—PTI*

Walt Disney, Mahindra group officials join USISPF Board

WASHINGTON, 20 JAN

Walt Disney and Mahindra group officials have joined the Board of Directors of US India Strategic and Partnership Forum, which the organisation said is testimony to the success story of American companies in India and a growing presence of Indian conglomerates in the US.The two officials are Dorothy Attwood, senior vice president of Global Legal, Policy and Compliance for The Walt Disney Company, and Amarjyoti (Amar) Barua, Executive Vice President (EVP) of Group Strategy at the Mahindra Group to the Board of Directors, the US India Strategic and Partnership Forum (USISPF) said in an announcement.Attwood, in her current role, is responsible for the company's international legal and government affairs functions around the world, outside of the US, and leads strategic public policy initiatives as well as ESG and Sustainability globally across all business segments.Attwood also leads the Privacy Legal Department and the Government Ethics and Compliance Group enterprise-wide. Barua is the EVP of Group Strategy at the Mahindra Group, a role he took up in May 2023. He is a member of the Group Executive Board. The additions of Dorothy and Amar are testimony to the success story of American companies in India and the growing presence of Indian conglomerates in the US. Disney has been a household name in India, entertaining generations from days of yore, from the iconic Mickey Mouse to now top content on digital platforms and new services, said USISPF president and CEO MukeshAghi. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Amazon reacts on CCPA inquiry over 'prasad'

NEW DELHI, 20 JAN

After it received a notice from the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) for selling sweets as 'Shri Ram MandirAyodhya Prasad', e-commerce company Amazon on Saturday said it is taking appropriate action against such listings in line with its policies.

Amazon acknowledged that it has received a communication from the CCPA regarding misleading product claims by certain sellers and said it is 'investigating them for violations'.

"In the interim, we are taking appropriate action against such listings as per our policies," Amazon spokesperson said in a statement.

The CCPA has slapped a notice on Amazon for selling sweets under the name 'Shri Ram MandirAyodhya Prasad'.

The CCPA has sought a response from Amazon within seven days, failing which necessary action will be initiated against them under the provisions of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, according to an official statement on Friday. *—PTI*

ICICI Bank net profit jumps 25.7% in Q3

MUMBAI, 20 JAN

ICICI Bank on Saturday said its consolidated net profit for the December quarter jumped 25.7 per cent to Rs 11,052.60 crore, up from Rs 8,792.42 crore.The second largest private sector lender posted a 23.6 per cent rise in standalone net profit for the third quarter of the current fiscal toRs 10,272 crore.

The bank's core net interest income was up 13.4 per cent to Rs 18,678 crore, on the back of net interest margin narrowing to 4.43 per cent and the domestic advances growth coming at 18.8 per cent.

The bank's other income grew 19.8 per cent to Rs 5,975 crore during the reporting quarter.

Its provisions came down to Rs 1,049.37 crore from the Rs 2,257.44 crore in the year-ago period, helping the profit growth. *—PTI*

Kotak Bank net profit rises 6.75% in 3rd Qtr

NEW DELHI, 20 JAN

Kotak Mahindra Bank on Saturday reported a 6.75 per cent growth in consolidated net profit to Rs 4,264.78 crore in the December quarter.The lender had reported a consolidated net profit of Rs 3,995.05 crore in the year-ago period.On a standalone basis, the private sector lender's profit after tax rose to Rs 3,005.01 crore from Rs2,791.88 crore in the year-ago period, but was lower than the preceding September quarter's Rs 3,190.97 crore.Total income rose to Rs 14,096 crore from Rs 10,947 crore in the year-ago period, while operating expenses increased to Rs 4,284 crore from Rs 3,751 crore, the bank said in an exchange filing.Overall provisions jumped to Rs 579.14 crore for the reporting quarter from Rs 148.83 crore in the year-ago period, which seemed to have impacted the profit growth. Gross non-performing assets ratio was stable at 1.73 per cent.. *—PTI*

RELIANCE SHARES FALL NEARLY 1% AFTER Q3 EARNINGS

MUMBAI, 20 JAN

Shares of Reliance Industries Ltd fell 1.30 per cent in morning trade on Saturday after the company reported its quarterly earnings.

The consolidated net profit of Rs 17,265 crore in the third quarter of the current fiscal was 9.3 per cent higher compared to the year-ago period.

RIL shares fell to 2,713.20 apiece, down 0,80 per cent compared to the previous close on the BSE. *—PTI*

THRIVING AI ECONOMY

Investments for Generative AI can boost job creations: Experts

NEW DELHI, 20 JAN

Major investments in generative AI (artificial intelligence), incentives from the government and open-source content can boost employment generation and reduce disparities in the country, say experts. Generative artificial intelligence refers to the use of new-age technology to create new content like text, images, music, audio, and videos.

"Generative AI will boost new job roles and can help people with limited skill levels perform higher level jobs, thus reducing the economic divide", said Vishal Talwar, Director, IMT Ghaziabad in a statement.

According to the statement, highlighting the need for robust infrastructure and special provisions in the upcoming budget for Generative AI-related innovation, IMT Ghaziabad steered a key discussion on Generative AI's role in skill development, job creation, and business education transformation earlier this month. The deliberations concluded that major Investments in Generative AI can boost employment and reduce disparities in society.

The IMT Ghaziabad envisions a future where Generative AI acts as a catalyst, not just for technological advancements but for empowering individuals with the skills needed in a rapidly evolving job landscape, he stated.

Prof MohanbirSawhney Associate Dean, Digital Innovation, McCormick Foundation Chair of Technology, Director of the Centre for Research in Technology & Innovation, Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management said that Indian companies can level the playing field in Generative AI by using the platforms and tools already created and building upon those tools to develop applications relevant for the Indian context.

"We have big problems in sectors like education, healthcare, agriculture. There are massive opportunities for solving these problems with uniquely Indian AI and Generative AI-powered solutions," he pointed out.

Given the scale of these problems, he said, "I believe they should be addressed by a collaborative effort between the private sector, the government, and NGOs. We also need to create nation-wide AI skilling initiative to ensure that we are building the talent needed for the future.

Nitin Mishra, Chief Technology Officer, ONDC, opined that Generative AI can improve the lives of people at the bottom of the pyramid. During the deliberations, Raghav Gupta, MD, India and Asia Pacific, Coursera, focused on the role of Generative AI in making learning more engaging and widening access to high-quality education. *—PTI*

MT Ghaziabad envisions a future where Generative AI acts as a catalyst but for empowering individuals *PHOTO: X*

- According to the statement, IMT Ghaziabad steered a key discussion on Generative AI's role in skill development, job creation, and business education transformation earlier this month

PHOTO: AP

Zaka Ashraf resigns as PCB Chairman

LAHORE, 20 JAN

The chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board's (PCB) Cricket Management Committee, Zaka Ashraf, stepped down from the post just two weeks before his extension was to expire. Zaka had been heading the CMC since July and the government gave it an extension in November until 4 February, but on Friday, Zaka submitted his resignation.He announced his resignation at the meeting of the CMC in Lahore.During his rocky tenure, the Pakistan team faltered in the Asia Cup and World Cup and faced a spate of defeats including their fourth straight loss in the ongoing T20 series in Christchurch, New Zealand. More importantly, neither the CMC headed by Zaka nor the one led by Najam Sethi was able to complete the task of forming a Board of Governors and holding an election for the post of permanent chairman.—AP

Girls played well, won't take any decision: Bholanath

RANCHI, 20 JAN

The Indian women's team might have failed to qualify for the Paris Games but Hockey India Secretary General Bholanath Singh rejected speculations about wholesome changes in the set-up and stressed the need to prepare for the next Olympic cycle. After finishing a creditable fourth in the Tokyo Olympics, the Indian team bowed out of the qualification race for the Paris Games with a 0-1 loss to Japan in the third-fourth place match of the just-concluded FIH Olympic Qualifier here on Friday.
—PTI

Raiza, Naruka secure India's 18th and 19th Oly quota

KUWAIT CITY, 20 JAN

Raiza Dhillon and Anant Jeet Singh Naruka secured two more Paris Games quotas for India to stretch the total number to 19, by winning silver medals in their respective skeet events at the Asia Olympic Qualification for Shotgun here on Saturday.Dhillon earned the country's 18th quota place by claiming the silver in the women's skeet before Naruka finished second on the podium in the men's skeet final with a total of 56, missing the gold by one point to Taipei's Meng Yuan Lee (57).Mohammad Aldaihani won the bronze and the second quota on offer in the men's final by shooting 47.
—AP

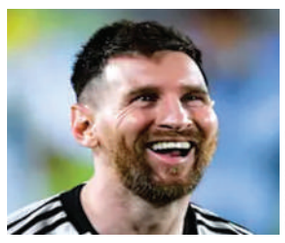

PHOTO: AP

Inter Miami begins 2024 preseason with a 0-0 draw

DUBAI, 20 JAN

Four days after being named FIFA's best men's player, Lionel Messi began the preseason with Inter Miami of Major League Soccer, which played to a scoreless draw with the El Salvador national team in an exhibition on Friday night.The Argentina star played in the first half alongside Uruguayan striker Luis Suarez, his new teammate for the upcoming MLS season. Suarez reunited with Messi in Miami after the pair played six seasons together with Barcelona.Fans packed the Cuscatlán stadium several hours before the start. El Salvador's president, Nayib Bukele, took the opportunity to meet Messi and hosted the team at the Presidential House ahead of the game.—*AP*

Saumy and Musheer star as India beat B'desh by 84 runs

India start their U-19 World Cup campaign on a winning note

BLOEMFONTEIN, 20 JAN

Left-arm spinners Saumy Kumar Pandey and Musheer Khan headlined a dominant Indian performance as the defending champions outclassed Bangladesh by 84 runs in their opening game of the ICC U-19 World Cup here Saturday.

While the total of 251 for 7 didn't look big, the two Indian spinners choked the run-flow, shooting out 'Tiger Cubs' for a meager 167 in 45.5 overs.

Skipper Uday Saharan (64 off 94 balls) and left-handed opener Adarsh Singh (76 off 96 balls) hit half-centuries after Bangladesh invited the holders to take the first strike.

Saumy (4/24) was economical and bowled the lethal arm ball with a skiddy action while all-rounder Musheer (2/35) tossed it up and got enough drift to tighten the noose around Bangladeshi batters.

Musheer, the younger brother of Mumbai's domestic stalwart Sarfaraz Khan, was a livewire on the field. He also effected a run-out.

What was impressive to see was no overt celebrations from either Saumy or Musheer, who carried on their job like thoroughbred professionals.

It was a fairly ill-tempered match with players from both sides indulging in sledding as the two teams have a history of tension across senior men, senior women, and U-19 level.

For the Indian team, it was sweet revenge after losing the Asia Cup semi-final to Bangladesh.

While the Indian batters found it difficult to get boundaries, the target was never below par as average score of teams batting first in Youth ODIs (U-19 ODI) at this ground was 201, and the highest successful chase being 243. India's 251/7 on the day was the third-highest score at this ground.

The team's designated finisher Sachin Dhas showed admirable technique and temperament during death overs with a nice little unbeaten cameo of 26 off 20 balls that took the score past the 250-run mark. The pulled-six-off seamer Rohanat Doullah Borson was a treat for the eyes.

This is despite allowing Bangladeshi bowlers to bowl dot balls worth 26 overs during their innings.

Left-arm seamer Maruf Mridha (5/43) did damage at the start and during slog overs by bowling in the right areas but would be a bit miffed with his skipper, who got his calculations wrong and didn't let him complete his quota of 10 overs.Possessing a skiddy action like Mustafizur Rahaman, Maruf varied his lengths, bowled closer to stumps at the start, and mixed cutters with wide yorkers at the death to make life difficult for the India colts.

The foundation of the Indian innings was laid by Adarsh (76 off 96 balls) and skipper Saharan (64 off 94 balls), who added 116 runs for the third wicket in nearly 23.5 overs. *—PTI*

Saumy Pandey registered figures of 4 for 24 **PHOTO: AP**

Rohan Bopanna celebrating the 500th match-win milestone of his career **PHOTO: AP**

AO: Bopanna opens up on 500 career wins

MELBOURNE, 20 JAN

Celebrating the 500th match-win milestone of his career, Rohan Bopanna says his consistent success had a lot to do with the clarity of thought and improved health that came with practicing Iyengar Yoga.

Bopanna and his Australian partner Matthew Ebden beat John Millman and Edward Winter in the second round of the Australian Open. This was Bopanna's 501st win of his career.

Bopanna is one of the most successful Indian tennis players. Leander Paes and Sania Mirza have enjoyed more than 700 wins in their respective glorious careers while Mahesh Bhupathi ended his successful career just three short of the 700-win mark.

"It's a truly special feeling that I got myself to 500 wins. There have been a lot of sacrifices in this journey and a lot of people were with me during this time," Bopanna, who is still going strong at the age of 43, told the official broadcast channel while talking to former Indian player Somdev Devvarman.

Asked about the changes and adjustments he had to make during his journey, Bopanna said he had altered his playing style of serve and volley and restricted himself to baseline play due to a knee issue.

"It was very difficult to not be able to serve and volley which I was always taught to do and was my style. I did not have cartilage on my knee and it would pain.

"I had to manage it and find new ways of playing that worked while playing at the highest level. Back in 2020, during the pandemic, I started doing Iyengar Yoga, and that significantly made a positive impact on my health. I could do 90-minute sessions four times a week." Iyengar Yoga is a style of yoga taught and made famous by Bellur Krishnamachar Sundararaja Iyengar, who was a yoga teacher and author of many books on yoga.

"I think mentally also I became much stronger. I was clearer in the way I was thinking while playing tennis. That made a great difference, it resulted in a great last year for me as I enjoyed myself being on the court." At 43, Bopanna became the oldest tennis player to win an ATP Masters series doubles title when he triumphed at the Indians Masters with partner Ebden. *—AP*

Top seed Swiatek stunned by 19-year old Linda Noskova

MELBOURNE, 20 JAN

The 2024 Australian Open is underway and has given us plenty of surprises already. The most stunning upset of the tournament so far came on the women's side Saturday when unseeded Linda Noskova defeated No. 1 seed Iga Swiatek, 3-6, 6-3, 6-4. After the first set, it looked like everything would go according to plan. However, Noskova came back with a vengeance and took the second set before finishing off Swiatek in the decisive third set. It was a stunner in an Australian Open that has seen several of those in the women's bracket. As the fourth round begins, only three of the top 10 women seeds remain. This tournament has been wide open for the women, but there are a couple of clear favorites now that other heavy hitters have been eliminated. No. 4 seed Coco Gauff marched past Alycia Parks in straight sets, 6-0, 6-2. Then, No. 2 seed Aryna Sabalenka made quick work of Lesia Tsurenko, 6-0, 6-0, in the third round.On the other hand, all but one of the top-10 seeded men are still competing, with No. 8 Holger Rune being the only exception. *—AP*

Bharat warms up for Test series with century

AHMEDABAD, 21 JAN

Kona Bharat made a strong case for his selection for the first Test against England with an attacking hundred as India A made hot pursuit of an improbable winning target of 490 before the opening first-class game against England Lions ended in a draw, here Saturday.When umpires called off proceedings on the fourth and final day, India were 426 for 5 in 125 overs, eventually finishing 64 runs short of the target. Bharat, whose batting performances left a lot to be desired in Test matches, made 116 not out off 165 balls with 15 boundaries.With India looking to give relief to KL Rahul from keeping wickets. *—PTI*

Haryana hands Manipur innings defeat inside two days

AHMEDABAD, 21 JAN

Haryana came up with an all-round performance to wrap up their Ranji Trophy Group A meeting versus Manipur inside two days here on Saturday, winning by an innings and 338 runs.

For Haryana, Himanshu Rana struck an unbeaten 250 that included 33 fours, while Nishant Sindhu made 119.

Resuming Day 2 on 391 for three, Haryana went on to post 508 for three.

In reply, Manipur were bundled out for a paltry 77 in the first innings, thanks to Rahul Tewatia and Jayant Yadav grabbing three wickets each, with K Priyojit Singh (24 not out) being the top scorer. In the second innings, Manipur could only better their first innings total by 16 runs, getting bowled out for 93.

In Delhi, the Group A match between Jharkhand and Services saw twin centuries from Virat Singh (108) and Kumar Kushagra (132), as the former posted a modest total of 316.

Jharkhand had resumed the day on 195 for four before the duo put on a 171-run partnership for the fifth wicket.

For Services, Varun Choudhary grabbed four wickets. In reply, Services batted decently. Opener Nitin Tanwar (1) retired hurt before Shubham Rohilla (35) and Ravi Chauhan (59 not out) added 82 more. Services finished the day on 128 for two. In Nagpur, the Group A game between Vidarbha and Saurashtra saw the former getting dismissed for a mere 78.

Vidarbha began the day on 26 for four before conceding a lead of 128 to Saurashtra. While Jitesh Sharma (28) was their top scorer, Chirag Jani dominated with four wickets.

In the second innings, Saurashtra put on a strong show, finishing the day on 205 for three, with Kevin Jivrajani (57) and Vishvarajsinh Jadeja (79). *—PTI*

Himanshu Rana **PHOTO: PTI**

AFC ASIAN CUP

SK salvage late draw with Jordan

DOHA, 20 JAN

South Korea snatched a draw from the jaws of defeat with a 2-2 draw with Jordan in its Group E match of the AFC Asian Cup 2023 at the Al Thumama Stadium here on Saturday.

Just when it looked like another upset was on the cards in this edition of the tournament, after Japan's 1-2 loss to Iraq, Yazan Al-Arab's own goal injected new life into Korean fans and players, making it all square in the first minute of second-half injury time.

Marching men up the pitch and creating chances through flanks. Its high press forced Jordan to slip up in discipline and, in the fourth minute, Ehsaan Haddad's late challenge on Son Heung-min created an opening for Korea. Took a look at the monitor and pointed to the spot. Son stepped up and scored his first goal of this Asian Cup with a calm finish into the net, sending goalkeeper Yaeed Abulaila on the wrong side. Jordan gradually grew into the game, having its first real chance in the 21st minute when Mousa Al-Tamari's left-footed hit forced a fingertip save by Korea's backup goalkeeper Jo Hyeon-woo, who replaced injured veteran Kim Seung-gyu. *—AP*

South Korea's midfielder Lee Jae-sung and defender Lee Ki-je vie for the ball against Jordan's defender Ehsan Haddad during their Qatar 2023 AFC Asian Cup Group E match at the Al-Thumama Stadium in Doha **PHOTO: AFP**

Arsenal claimed a 5-0 win against Crystal Palace on Saturday afternoon, ending a three-match winless streak across all competitions **PHOTO: X**

Arsenal beat Crystal Palace 5-0 to close the gap in the PL

DOHA, 20 JAN

Arsenal showed their expertise from set-pieces and put their goalscoring problems behind them to thrash a dismal Crystal Palace side 5-0 and move within two points of Premier League leaders Liverpool.

The Gunners came into the game with the best record from dead-ball scenarios and scored two goals from corners in the first half as Gabriel headed home the first - before the Brazilian forced an own goal off Palace goalkeeper Dean Henderson.

After the break, Arsenal then scored from a Palace corner, which David Raya claimed and fed Gabriel Jesus on the break. The Brazilian found Leandro Trossard, who did Arsenal's much-maligned forward group a favor by finishing a clear-cut chance at the Emirates Stadium.

Palace then gave up in stoppage time as Gabriel Martinelli scored twice to put a sensational gloss on the scoreline.

The win moves Mikel Arteta's side above Aston Villa into third - with the pressure on Jurgen Klopp's Liverpool to extend their lead at the top as they travel to Bournemouth on Sunday.

However, the result did come at a cost for title-chasing Arsenal, who saw goal-getter Declan Rice and Gabriel go off with injuries in the second half.

Meanwhile, it is one win in 12 matches in all competitions for Roy Hodgson's Palace, who unveiled two angry banners towards full-time which read: 'Wasted potential on and off the pitch, weak decisions taking us backward' and 'no shared vision no structured plan'.
—AP

DARK HORSE AT THE OLYMPICS

Prannoy is mentally very strong: Kenneth Jonassen

NEW DELHI, 20 JAN

A matured and experienced HS Prannoy is enjoying the best phase of his career and would be one of the dark horses at the Paris Olympics, reckons Denmark's head coach Kenneth Jonassen.

Prannoy had a phenomenal season in 2023, winning a maiden bronze medal at the Asian Games and World Championships, and also sealed his first Super 500 title at the Malaysia Masters besides finishing runner-up at the Australia Open.

Jonassen, who has coached the likes of world no. 1 Viktor Axelsen and world no. 7 Anders Antonsen, believes Prannoy has an all-round game and is mentally strong.

"I see him as one of the dark horses. In the last 12 months that he's had, he is again extremely confident. His game is very rounded. It's a good attack, good defense, very physical appearance, fast and mentally very strong on court," Jonassen told PTI during an interview.

Prannoy, 31, qualified for his maiden semifinal at the India Open Super 750 badminton tournament after defeating Chinese Taipei's Wang Tzu Wei here on Friday.

"I see him as one of those outsiders that maybe not go in as a favorite. But one of those that when he puts in his 'A' game is very, very hard to beat, no matter who you are.

"And, I think a little bit about what has seemed to have happened, he has been injury-free for a long time. He is slowly getting confidence and then matured and experienced, all put into one.

"And that's why I believe, together with his coaches, he's enjoying, I think, the best time of his badminton career at the moment.".

'Physically and mentally, quality of badminton has just gone up' The 49-year-old Jonassen, who had won the 2003 Korea Open and 2004 Singapore Open as a player, has seen the game evolve in the last two decades and feels it has "most definitely" become more "fierce". "If I look at the top 25 to maybe 28 players, I would consider world-class players. On that day that can beat more or less each and everybody. The game is much more physical. These days it's very difficult to make easy points.

"It's great to see that men's single is pushing what I would call sometimes physical, what is possible to do.

"You don't get much more fit athletes than those guys, running around in men's singles, having to endure 80 minutes of grueling and then stepping up and having to play the next day and the next day and the next day."So, physically and mentally, just quality of badminton has just gone up but the competition level is so fierce right now that you cannot be on 90 percent.
—PTI

Kenneth Jonassen **PHOTO: PTI**

HS Prannoy **PHOTO: PTI**

- India's HS Prannoy was completely outplayed by world no. 2 Shi Yu Qi of China as he crashed out of the India Open Super 750 badminton tournament after a straight-game loss in the semi-finals here on Saturday.